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What distinguishes our Party is the political continuity which goes from Marx to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy (Livorno, 1921); the struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of the Third International, against the theory of "socialism in one country", against the Stalinist counter-revolution; the rejection of the Popular Fronts and the Resistance Blocs; the difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organization in close interrelationship with the proletarian class, against all personal and electoral politics.

1917-2017: LONG LIVE RED OCTOBER! LONG LIVE THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION OF THE FUTURE!

We are certain that this 2017, the hundredth anniversary of the October Revolution, will be marked by the most irate and revolting anti-communism. There will be a revival (a ridiculously banal version, as it is suited to a ruling ideology that is inevitably the expression of the progressive putrefaction of the capitalist mode of production and all its social relations) of the campaign of slander, attacks, mystification and distortion, manipulation and misrepresentation through which, ever since the conquest of the Winter Palace, the ideologists of the ruling capitalist class have attempted to deny the need – tragically urgent – for the classless society of communism. Though never succeeding: the same rancour and the same perversion revealed in the ideological and practical mobilization of the ruling class against Red October are all too clear a proof that the terror of communism is ever-present, all the more so, since the dead end in which capitalism is struggling, with no idea how to disentangle itself, is fuelling its worst fears. But there will also, above all (another aspect of anti-communism, even though it may not seem so to the uninformed) be the rhetorical embalming of Red October by all those who, having inherited and carried forward the democratic, social-democratic and Stalinist tradition, have abandoned themselves to exercises in rhetoric in the hope of recovering some last remnants of identity, and naturally they do so using all the necessary shades of distinction, all the acrobatic moves to distance themselves, all the hypocrisy typical of penitents and traitors, all the balancing acts and somersaults that their infamous history has accustomed them to over the arc of a hundred years. Both sides are fluid, superimposable and interchangeable, taking turns to alternate and dissimulate. Above all, they are ready to merge into a single, compact anti-proletarian front the moment it becomes necessary, when our



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class demonstrates that it no longer intends passively accepting the oppression it is subjected to day by day and threatens to take the path of a class-driven and revolutionary response.

For us, returning to Red October, as we shall be doing in the course of the year, with articles and public initiatives wherever our forces make it possible, is no pathetic “how we were”, the umpteenth example of “frozen memory”. The experience of 1917 (as of the Paris Commune of 1871), the point of arrival of long work by the party beginning in 1848 and pre-supposing the extension of the revolutionary process in time and space (something that the bourgeois counter-revolution in all its democratic, social-democratic, Nazi-fascist and Stalinist forms, has impeded for these terrible, long decades) is living material for us, from which precious and vital lessons can be learned for a future which, in material terms, is inevitably being prepared. For us “Red October” is not a nostalgic slogan, an inoffensive icon: it is a battle cry that we have been spreading with bared teeth and claws ever since, to pass on to the younger generations, who will have to face with a militant spirit the devastating death throes of a mode of production that has reached all the historical limits of its own existence. And which must therefore be destroyed, on pain of unspeakable suffering (by means of exploitation, poverty, famine, devastation, war) for our species, which only in communism can define itself human.

A hundred years

If we look back to the century that has passed since that 1917 and glance around us at capitalist society's present “health conditions”, there are more than enough reasons for calling a halt to this mode of production once and for all. Has there, by any chance, been one

single moment in these hundred years when the weapons have been silent? Two world wars, an infinite number of wars or more or less “local” squabbles, an endless succession of invasions and coups d'état, incursions and bloodbaths, bombings and ethnic cleansing, with dozens upon dozens, *hundreds of millions* of deaths, slaughter that seems to have no end to it: in our perfectly civilized Europe, as in the “suburbs of hell”, in Asia or Latin America. Even limiting ourselves to today, this present that causes the bleating “rightful thinkers” so much anguish, the destruction of lives that continues in a Middle East massacred by *all* the imperialist, regional and world powers – or in an Africa that remains a hunting ground, a horrendous safari for the ex-colonial powers transformed into imperialism (either predominant or second-rate-but-aspiring) with the joint responsibility of the local bourgeois élites trained and maintained through long decades of capitalist penetration, there should be food for thought... Just as there is food for thought in the striking and exponential development in the design and sales of increasingly sophisticated and deadly arms of mass destruction, with their providential effects on the economy in all countries – more goods to produce and sell (legally or illegally), consume and produce again as soon as possible, in order to gain fat profits to inflate a faltering GNP... Where does all this come from? Do we really want to listen to the stupid banalities of ruling ideology, religious or not? Evil, Folly, Dishonesty, the Baddy, the Monster, Mankind's Malevolent Nature... Can we really be satisfied with such idiocies that deliver up the present and future into the arms of the petit-bourgeoisie – arms spread in surrender but always ready, “at the call of the Fatherland”, to seize a

machine gun against the Current Enemy?

Has there been a single moment when the capitalist economy in its phase of expansion and accumulation of capital, as in the recession phase of overproduction and crisis, has not crushed human lives – millions and millions of lives in the advanced West, as in “developing countries”, an ever-swelling mass of proletarians who possess nothing except their own labour to pour into the prisons of the factories, the mines, more or less clandestine sweatshops, in the camps and on the seas, in the streets or in the offices? How many millions of billions of surplus-labour hours have been extracted from those muscles and nerves, those bodies exhausted by the rate of production, the poisons and the machines, those brains annulled by endless labour with no future prospects apart from a series of identical days, chained to the production line? How many millions of murders at the workplace (and assassinations of rebellious or battlesome proletarians, in the picketlines, in strikes or demonstrations or more “simply” in proletarian neighbourhoods) have been perpetrated by the ruling, bourgeois class using its armed wing, known as the State, in these hundred years? How many billions upon billions of hours have been stolen from the lives of children, women, elderly people, accumulating torment after torment? How many billions upon billions of hours in the useless search for a job, driven to resignation and often to suicide, have assailed, tormented and exhausted those who were thrown out of their jobs, not only by the exceptional nature of the crisis but also by the normal practice of production processes based on the anarchy of production? How can all this suffering be “quantified”? At times, when describing the living and working



conditions of clandestine workers, proletarians struck by the collapse of a mine or burned in a factory fire, some bourgeois ideologist, some pen-pusher, even goes so far as to speak of “things reminiscent of the industrial revolution” – as if, in those circumstances, there had somehow been a “return to the past”. No! These “things” have accompanied and will continue to accompany capitalism yesterday, today and tomorrow, for the whole span of its lifetime, which consists in continuous upheavals and technological innovations.

“But what else can be done?” replies the right-thinking person. Exactly.

In today’s cynical vocabulary, one of the most frequently used words is “refugee”. But just how many millions of “refugees” can be counted in the span of these one hundred years, fleeing from poverty and famine, wars and devastation, lack of work and social and political oppression? Huge migrations, movements of entire populations amidst unheard-of suffering –going where? Where is a “where” that might somehow save these lives from destruction in a world dominated by a capital that can only grow on conditions that it destroys, the eternal competition of all its different segments in industry, locally, regionally and nationally, founded on the motto, never before so effectively translated into practice, of “*mors tua, vita mea*”?

The right-thinking bleater worries about environmental collapse, the exponential increase in violence against women and children, the growing meanness in social life at all levels, the progressive degeneration of inter-personal relations: “racism”, “populism”, “male chauvinism”, “paedophilia”, “women as sex objects”... And, the poor innocent!, he demands “more police control, more soldiers, more State

intervention,” – as though these were not amongst the (skillfully used) tools of the same ruling class that is responsible for these disasters. Or “more culture”, as if it were purely a matter of ignorance, of individual backwardness. Instead, these poisons, material and ideological, chemical and psychological, have *always* accompanied the “magnificent and progressive fates” of the class society founded on the generation of plus-value, on the search for profit, the commodification of individuals and the masses – *always*, ever since it fought the *just and necessary battle* against the previous mode of production, the feudal mode (and it did so by *taking up arms*). It would be sufficient to look at how Africa has been reduced by the penetration of capital, first colonial and then imperialist, with the desertification of immense areas, endemic famine for entire populations, ethnic wars purposely fuelled (*divide et impera*), the endless migrations to escape hunger or disease; or to study (but *materialistically, not moralistically*) “women’s conditions” in “advanced” as well as “backward” countries, in lay countries and in strictly religious ones, to realize this!

At this point, there will be some who object: “But we have travelled to the moon, we have invented antibiotics, we have the Internet!” Is it worth replying?

Today, try as it may, the ruling class is unable to solve the crisis of its own mode of production. On the contrary, new and devastating crises loom on the horizon and the clashes between imperialisms are becoming increasingly serious. And so explosive materials are accumulated which, when all other “solutions” prove to be impracticable, will lead to another generalized conflict, no longer local or limited to one area – *a third world war*.

A hundred years. Seems like yesterday.

sterday.

The need for communism

Capitalism is not just the umpteenth embodiment of the devil: we know very well what its *progressive function* was in combatting and defeating the previous mode of production – the feudal. But now its *own* time has come and it must ring its *own* death knell. This is why we return to Red October (and the Paris Commune), to *look towards the future*: to the necessary struggle and organization for overthrowing this mode of production which, even in its death throes, will not die of its own accord, and indeed will make these death throes even more toxic and destructive.

On all levels, economic as political, in society as in the environment or in interpersonal relationships, the need for communism is becoming keener every day – and more *urgent*, because the ideological and material poisons, the general upheaval, the worsening living conditions of the vast majority of the world population have reached unprecedented levels which could even threaten the very future of our species.

For decades, the dominant ideology has insisted on the “failure of communism”. In actual fact the chapter on communism has yet to be written. Communism as a *radically different* mode of production compared to the capitalist mode, has never existed, either in Russia or in China or in Cuba, or in the variegated geography of the “national socialisms” invented in the course of decades of counter-revolution. *This is not a recent argument of ours*. Ever since the mid-1920s, communists have led a long and bitter fight, which could well be called heroic, to make manifest, at both a theoretical and a practical level, the false and ominous myth of “socialism in a single country”, with all the destructive consequences this has had



on the workers' and communist movement. The experience of our organization demonstrates this with impeccable clarity: all the *work of analysis* that has been done, consisting of writings and documentation, and the long and direct line of *open battles* carried forward by our comrades from generation to generation, against any form of revisionism and opportunism. And it is not our intention to summarise all this here¹.

In 1917, right in the midst of the world war, Tsarist Russia was the weak link in the imperialist chain. Siding with France and England and later with the United States, i.e. with one of the two bourgeois groups involved in the conflict, it was a largely backward, rural country with its capitalist development still in an embryonic state, despite already having set out along the path. But the whole world was in an electrified state in those years at the turn of the century, capitalism had already entered its most aggressive, imperialist phase, and everywhere (in Europe as in the Americas and in Asia) great, *instinctively class-based* proletarian movements were shaking its foundations, questioning its very survival. The "globalization" residing in the DNA of capital (which now, in its imperialist phase, has become *anonymous and impersonal*, no longer necessarily linked to the "figure" of the individual capitalist but rather embodied in the State-entrepreneur and -policeman) was thus accompanied by a *necessarily worldwide dimension in revolutionary prospects and processes*: already the Paris Commune, in the words of Engels, had been *the proletariat's*

first worldwide class war. The revolution growing at the very heart of bourgeois society could only be of an *international nature and scale*.

Given the economic and social conditions in Russia at the time, the October Revolution, guided by the Bolshevik party (and pre-announced by the tentative 1905 revolution, put down amidst bloodshed) was – and could not fail to be – a "double revolution", as Lenin demonstrated so well in texts such as *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (1905) and the "April Theses" (1917), following in the tracks of Marx and Engels' analyses of the "permanent revolution"²: a *communist revolution on the political plane* (since it is grounded on the proletariat and is directed by the Bolshevik party) but with *democratic-bourgeois tasks on the economic and social plane*, particularly due to the strong presence of the peasantry. It was therefore a question of *seizing power* against the Tsar and against the bourgeoisie and, *once this was safely secured*, introducing capitalism in Russia under State management through its vital nerve centres, doing so in close connection with the "pure revolution" (*exclusively proletarian, without social-democratic tasks*) in a fully developed Western world. *From the very beginning this was the strategy of Lenin and the communists*: Russia was supposed to resist until power had fallen into the hands of the communists in the key countries of Europe, first and foremost (in view of the highly developed forces of production) in Germany. Lenin's vision did not contain an iota of utopianism: "so-

cialism in a single country" was impossible in any case and especially in a backward country like Russia. Not until power was firmly in the hands of western comrades, would the two "halves" be able to join and merge, and then the "path to socialism" would open up. Just to prove how clear this strategy was to the proletariat, it will suffice to quote the episode narrated by John Reed in his *Ten Days that Shook the World*: "A soldier from the Rumanian front, thin, tragical and fierce, cried: 'Comrades! We are starving at the front, we are stiff with cold. We are dying for no reason. I ask the American comrades to carry word to America, that the Russians will never give up their Revolution until they die. We will hold the fort with all our strength until the peoples of the world rise and help us. Tell the American workers to rise and fight for the Social Revolution' (Chapter II)³."

The turning point in this perspective was then to be The *Communist International*, founded in 1919 (N.B. *right in the middle of the civil war*, with Russia in the stranglehold of all capitalisms, the enemies of yesterday, now – *against the proletariat* – all allies) for the purpose of coordinating the world's communists under a single organization. The delay and defeat (N.B. *weapons at the ready*) of the revolution in Germany meant that the revolution in Russia remained isolated and in the end folded in on itself: peasantry and petit-bourgeoisie, *material economic forces*, gradually gained the upper hand both inside the Bolshevik party and in the Communist International, already



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[1] Amongst our many works, we at least wish to remember: *Dialogato con Stalin* (1952), *Russia e rivoluzione nella teoria marxista* (1954-55), *Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d'oggi* (1955-57), *Bilan d'une révolution* (1967), *Perché la Russia non è socialista* (1970).

[2] See at least: "The Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" (1850).

[3] See also "Il bolscevismo, pianta di ogni clima", *Il Soviet*, 23/2/1919 (now in our *Storia della sinistra comunista*, Vol. I, Edizioni il programma comunista, 1992, pp. 343-344).

undermined by tactical and strategic wavering, which we vigorously opposed, from comrade to comrade⁴.

“Stalinism” was the political expression of these *prevailing* economic forces: of a ruling class as impersonal as the capital that it expresses, and grounded on the peasantry and petit-bourgeoisie. The “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants” was gradually replaced by the impersonal dictatorship of capital; this was followed by a rapid upturning, from both a theoretical and a practical point of view, of all the lynchpins of the communist doctrine, on both the economic and political planes. It was accompanied by the *relentless elimination* of all the Bolshevik “old guard”, a necessary precondition for taking part in the second world massacre, through an alliance first with one and then with the other of the two imperialist sides.

We must not waste any more

words on recalling all the lies hurled at our class by the counter-revolution in the course of the decades: from the “socialist nature” of the USSR to the “collapse of communism”. *Neither socialism, nor communism have ever made an appearance in Russia (and even less so in the other countries which, following Stalinism, theorized their “own” “national socialism”).* The need for communism is thus revealed in all its great urgency.

The conditions for the proletarian revolution

Revolutions are not invented, or made: this is one of the great lessons of Red October, firmly anchored in the theoretical and practical experience of the 1905 Russian Revolution, the Paris Commune of 1871 and 1848 in Europe. Revolutions develop from *objective conditions*, from *material conditions*, that

drive (*oblige*) enormous masses, exasperated and unaware, to rebel in the attempt to *finally* shake off the régime that is oppressing and massacring them. Yes, *unaware*: the revolution is not and cannot be the result of spreading “class consciousness”, which is sparked off in some mysterious way by “being a proletarian”, as many upholders of this spontaneous process (or reformists) would have it, soaked as they are in bourgeois and petit-bourgeois “culture” and “idealism”.

“So you want a revolution of the unaware?” they will exclaim with horror. It isn’t a matter of “wanting” or “not wanting”: *materialistically*, this is how the revolutionary process develops. The proletarian masses do not move because they possess a clear vision of the tactics, strategy, programme and aims of communism. They move, or will move, because they are exasperated, because they are unable to live (or



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[4] See *Storia della sinistra comunista*, Vols. III and IV, Edizioni il programma comunista, respectively 1986 and 1997 (Vol. V will be available in the coming months). See also our recent pamphlet *La crisis del 1926 nel Partito russo e nell'Internazionale Comunista* (2016).



survive) any longer, because they are tormented by hunger, poverty, war, massacres, because the social and political crisis is now generally widespread and even the ruling class is staggering and unable to cope. These, in a nutshell, are the *objective conditions necessary* for the revolutionary process to unravel.

Do they suffice? *No, of course not. Another condition* is required, *this time subjective*, but closely interwoven with the objective conditions: the operational presence, acknowledged and supported by a decisive part of the militant avant-garde, of the *revolutionary party*.

Over to Lenin: "As long as the question was (and in so far as it still is) one of winning over the vanguard of the proletariat to Communism, propaganda is in the forefront. In this case, even circles, with all the weaknesses characteristic of the circle spirit, are useful and produce fruitful results. When it is a question of practical action by the masses, of ranging, if one may so express it, vast armies, the alignment of *all* the class forces of a given society *for the final and decisive battle*, then using propaganda alone, the mere repetition of the truths of 'pure' communism, are of no avail. In these circumstances one must not count in thousands, like the propagandist, who belongs to a limited group that has not yet directed the masses; in these circumstances one must count in millions and tens of millions. In these circumstances we must not only ask ourselves whether we have convinced the avant-garde of the revolutionary class, but also whether the historically effective forces of *all* classes -- positively of all the classes of a given society without exception -- are aligned in such a way that everything is fully ripe for the decisive battle; so that 1) all the class

forces hostile to us have become sufficiently entangled, are sufficiently at loggerheads with each other, have sufficiently weakened themselves in a struggle which is beyond their strength; that 2) all the vacillating, wavering, unstable, intermediate elements -- the petit bourgeoisie and the petit-bourgeois democrats -- have sufficiently exposed themselves in the eyes of the people, have sufficiently disgraced themselves through their practical failures; and that 3) among the proletariat a mass sentiment in favour of supporting the most determined, boldest, revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie has arisen and begun to grow strongly. Then revolution is indeed ripe; then, if we have correctly gauged all the conditions previously indicated and briefly outlined, and if we have chosen the right moment, our victory is assured" (Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, 1920)⁵.

And again: "The basic law of revolution, confirmed by all revolutions and in particular by all three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century [1905, February 1917, October 1917 -- ed.] is as follows: for revolution it is not sufficient for the exploited and oppressed masses to be aware of the impossibility of living as in the past and demanding changes; for revolution, it must be impossible for the exploiters to live and govern as in the past. Only when the "lower layers" of society no longer want the past and the "higher" ones can no longer live as they did in the past, can the revolution be victorious" (Lenin, *Ibid*, Chap. 9).

From these two quotations (amongst the many possible ones), it is clear that the *decisive element*, without which (and history itself demonstrates this tragically and bloodily) any "assault to the sky" is

destined to be defeated, is the *revolutionary party, the organ directing the revolution*, of any mass movement bursting out of the subsoil of a society now going through a chronic crisis.

Only these two elements, interacting in a dialectic relationship (objective and subjective conditions: a proletariat determined, under the pressure of *determining material conditions*, to put an end to the existing régime; a party which, over time, through *long work in contact with the class and its defensive and aggressive battles*, has gained its trust, in a practical and material sense), only through these two elements, interacting in a dialectic relationship, can the *revolutionary process aimed at seizing power* develop and affirm itself. This is the great lesson we learn from Red October. How pathetic are those "historians", opinion-leaders, or scribblers (they have always existed and plenty more will continue to in this 2017!), who blab on about the October Revolution being a "surprise move" by Lenin: a *putsch*...! And they blithely forget (or keep quiet about) what prepared October: the 1905 revolution, the unceasing class war by Tsarism (ally of "democratic countries") against the Russian proletariat and peasantry, the untold suffering caused at the front and in the back lines, the repeated episodes of mutiny and insubordination in the army, the fall of the Tsar and those days of July, the Bolsheviks' conquest of the Soviets, the armed opposition to Komilov's reactionary attempt... a whole process fermenting and maturing (*and not only in Russia!*) and which the Bolsheviks managed to fuel and organize, over the months and the years. And which would have its outcome, not in the "great day" (or



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[5] See our "L'estremismo, malattia infantile del comunismo", *condanna dei futuri rinnegati* (1960-61), Edizioni il programma comunista, Milano 1973

"night"), but in the *ten days that shook the world*. A revolution is not made or invented but organized and guided: *on condition that its preparation has been fought for previously and that it is the revolutionary party that organizes and guides it, towards the conquest of power.*

The issue of power

This is what it was all about then and what will be the issue tomorrow, too (a tomorrow we must prepare): the *seizing of power*. Not hypothetical improvements within society as it stands. Not repairs, embellishments, greasepaint to hide the wrinkles. Briefly, not democratic and reformist illusions. The objective of the proletarian revolution is to seize power: i.e. to destroy the bourgeois State which, with all its apparatus, is the *political-military-financial-police-ideological organ of the ruling class* – not to "occupy" it, almost as though it were an empty room to be thoroughly re-decorated, or a simulacrum to be brought back to life. In a class society the State is not a neutral, non-partisan organism that takes responsibility for mediating, "for the good of everyone": no, it is the tool, by which the ruling class exercises its power over the whole of society and first and foremost over the class it rules.

The proletariat, guided by its party, will therefore seize power and exercise it with all the strength, determination and boldness it possesses when it manages to shake off the mortal embrace of opportunist, reformist and counter-revolutionary parties. It must exercise this power both to defend the ongoing revolution from all the external and internal attacks (which will be – once again history offers proof of this – furious, merciless, bloody), and to carry out all those *despotic interventions in the economy and in society* that can free the forces of production from the straitjacket of

obsolete and historically outdated juridic forms and relationships. It must do this by means of its *own* dictatorship, directed by its *own* party, as a bridge towards a classless society and thus (*only then*) also Stateless; and it will have to do all this in an *international, worldwide* perspective and dimension, not local or national, on pain of defeat.

Communists are not anarchists who imagine that the "new world", the "new order", rise like the sun, on the morrow of the "great day". A bitter fight awaits us: before they could say they had defeated all the concentric attacks by all the capitalist countries allied against them, the Bolsheviks had to defend the power they had won over long years of siege, of unheard-of suffering, against enemies, and not only external ones, who would not accept their defeat. Here again, we shall not repeat what communists have always maintained and upheld over the span of over a hundred and fifty years of bitter fighting, both in theory and practice: once again, the texts of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, our own texts, will suffice, the very experience of the workers' and communist movement suffices. *There is nothing more to add!*

"We must seize power!" Lenin repeated with hammer-like insistence before October. This is a slogan always brandished by communists, even when the situation is not yet mature, since it has to penetrate into the daily struggles of the proletariat: in the sense that it is always, despite everything, a *matter of power relations*. The proletariat fighting in its strikes and picket-lines against the boss's henchmen and the legal and illegal armed gangs of the bourgeois State must understand not only that, beyond passing victories (which are nonetheless necessary for survival), it is *power that makes the difference* – the power of organization developed throughout the

territory, class solidarity above and beyond any internal divisions, the dogged response to any attack by the enemy. Yet, despite the partial victories that can be won, the ultimate and supreme problem is that of *power*, their own power, won and exercised in an organized manner with no misgivings or weakness, against the old ruling class.

This is true for any aspect, any "problem" resulting from the capitalist mode of production. For example, how is it possible to impose merely an *effective reduction* in working hours, eliminating exploitation, harmful working conditions, inequalities of all descriptions, growing unemployment, and reorganizing the whole of the industrial system so that it really is at the service not of profit but of the needs of the human species, without power resting firmly in the hands of the proletariat and its Party? Or again: can we really delude ourselves that the problem of the environment, the present, growing hydrological and geological upheavals – the fruit of capitalist anarchy – can be solved, without the central, centralised and centralising power working not only for today but also for future generations?

If we fail to understand the need for this power, we inevitably relapse into a logic of faint-hearted reformism, which becomes all the more frustrating as the destructive potential of capitalism grows and advances. On the other hand, merely by understanding the need for seizing power, and thus for a centralised, militant organization that has this objective, and only in this way, can even partial struggles be firmly and unrelentingly carried out for the defence of living and working conditions, in the awareness of the proletariat's own strength and making sure this force and power is felt by the enemy, whether it be the bosses or the State with their terrorist



practices.

Against imperialist war

"Bread, land, peace!": this was the Bolshevik party's direct and effective summary of its programme and it managed to gather the proletarian class and poor peasants around itself, *thanks to long, preparatory efforts*. "Bread" and "land" mean the reorganization of society in open antagonism to the laws of Capital, which, on the contrary, exploits, impoverishes and starves: this is a situation that has been going on since the dawn of the industrial revolution and the affirmation of the capitalist mode of production... Marx, in *Capital*, and Engels, in *The Situation of the Working Class in England*, amongst their many other works, had already revealed this. And during the 1800s, that effective synthesis, "bread" and "land" had always constituted the core of the programmes of all those parties worthy of being called socialist. A third element necessarily had to be added to them during the bloodbath of the first world massacre: "peace". The obscene betrayal of European social-democracy, aligned (with the exception of small groups of comrades) in favour of war credits in their respective States, had represented the break with the whole tradition, theory and practice of Marxism. Those small groups of comrades met in Switzerland (at Zimmerwald in 1915, at Kienthal in 1916) to reset the compass: *against imperialist war, civil war for the seizing of power*.

Once more, no new invention, no "coup de main" by Lenin or whoever else: communism is no bleating Christian pacifism, it is a battle cry, the class war to put an end to all wars, destroying once and for all the last, class-based society that those wars inevitably produce. Here, we immediately see the measure of that other immense, disgusting betrayal

perpetrated by Stalinism, then triumphant (even, and amidst bloodshed, over the communist "old guard"): that of taking sides first with one and then with the other of the imperialist fronts in the second imperialist massacre! "Peace" could thus only mean "War on war", the seizing of power - the dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasants directed by the communist party - the immediate suspension of any military activity on the fronts of the imperialist war, even at the cost of serious concessions.

Once again the Russian comrades were able to plant this slogan in a general atmosphere of refusal to go on being massacred in the trenches, not only by the Russian proletarians and poor peasants, but also by a large part of "proletarians in uniform" in Europe, the United States and even Australia. We have already documented (and it will be useful to continue doing so) the episodes of fraternising on both sides and the spontaneous refusals of imperialist war that kept happening in those bloody years. What was the rout of Caporetto in Italy, if not an immediate "No!" to the massacre, complete with the shooting of war-mongering officers by proletarians in uniform, unfortunately abandoned to their own devices by a wavering and legalist socialist party, (and there were many more heroic acts of resistance which deserve to be brought to light, such as the revolts in Turin in August 1917)? In Germany the sailors of the German fleet anchored at Wilhelmshaven and at Kiel rebelled several times in the course of those two tragic years, 1917 and 1918, even managing to set up a soviet of soldiers. In France, starting as early as 1916, there was a whole series of acts of insubordination culminating in the widespread mutinies of spring 1917 in the horrendous Chemin des Dames and other locations (30 thou-

sand soldiers refusing to fight; something like 3 500 convictions, of which 554 were death penalties, around fifty of which executed) and in the episode of the revolt by the Russian soldiers stationed at La Courtine, with the institution of a local soviet (an episode long hushed up by the French authorities, but recounted with abundant references and in great detail by John Reed in his *Ten Days that Shook the World*). The English soldiers posted in France were no exception to all this (particularly at the time of the bloodshed and horrors of the battles of Ypres and Passchendaele), supported by a vigorous anti-military movement at home, in the proletarian areas of Clydesdale, South Wales, Yorkshire and Lancashire. In the United States, the Industrial Workers of the World conducted a determined anti-military campaign based on class and were victims of ferocious and pitiless repression, and the left wing of that enormous charabanc that constituted the Socialist Party of America obliged the party to at least assume a neutral position and contrary to war. In Australia a great stir was caused by the arrest in September 1916 of the "twelve of Sydney", militant workers who were members of Industrial Workers of the World, accused of treason and sedition because of their intense work against the draft.

These are just a few examples. However, they demonstrate on the one hand how wide-ranging mobilisation (even instinctive, spontaneous) was against the war by the world proletariat, and on the other hand the *always international and internationalist perspective* animating the Russian comrades in brandishing those three, brief words in the slogan "Bread, land, peace". Quite a different thing to "Lenin paid by the German high command", as repeated at the time (and obstinately repeated today, too)

by the stupid bourgeois parrots of *all colours*! As is well-known, peace came, with the Brest-Litovsk treaty, signed on 3 March 1918, a few months after the conquest of the Winter Palace, putting an end to the slaughter of proletarians on either side of the eastern front. "Typical of Russia"? "Typical of 1917"? No. "typical" of what must make its comeback today, too, at the core of the daily work of theoretical clarification and propaganda, agitation, proselytism and organization of the world communist party. "War on war" or – better still – the "transformation of imperialist war into civil war for the seizing of power" was no chance event for the Russian comrades: it was the point of arrival of a whole body of work, both clandestine and not, in contact with the proletarian class, and revolving around *revolutionary defeatism*, or the task of disintegrating the Tsarist army, dismantling the hierarchies, creating soldiers' soviets ... work

that cannot be improvised, like all the tactics and strategies of communism, but was a long time in preparation and – once again – presupposed the assiduous and militant presence and intervention of the revolutionary party. *On pain of disaster.*

Revolutionary defeatism is, in fact, an integral part of communist strategy and develops in diverse fields and periods, not only in the military field and in wartime. This means that it presupposes an understanding of the bourgeois State's class nature, as well as all its ramifications and the need for it to be overthrown: *Marx, Engels, Lenin, and 1848, 1871 and 1905 teach us the lesson.* In turn, this implies long, deep-rooted work alongside our class, to reintroduce the awareness that the national economy is not something to be safeguarded and defended, on the altar of which living and working conditions should be sacrificed; and that its "higher

needs" are a trap to catch the proletariat and lead it, bound hand and foot, to the "defence of the Nation", in a war of fratricide against other proletarians. To sum up, the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war for the seizing of power, or revolutionary defeatism in a class society, will not be possible unless renewed development is seen, *under the pressure of material events* and thanks to *the intervention of the revolutionary party*, of a class antagonism that refuses any sort of negotiation, of "union sacrée", of identity of interests between Capital and Class, and that assumes its own organizational structures for the defence of its living and working conditions in the territory and outside the bars of the workplace (or lack-of-workplace).

And revolutionary defeatism means internationalism. It is clear that the refusal to side with national capital in day-to-day class conflicts or alongside the "threatened Nation"



PRACTICALLY CHUMS



in those crucial phases that lead to the inter-imperial conflict, implies an international and strategic vision and perspective, no matter whether this is clear to the majority of the proletarian masses. Indeed it is in the outburst and deepening of the real class war – i.e. a war that draws strength from clashes with the bosses, the State and their political and union lackeys, at the same time fuelling more widespread social antagonism – that *class and internationalist solidarity* is reborn and reinforced. On the other hand, either the revolutionary process develops internationally (not in the stupid and banal sense of “contemporarily” but in the substantial sense of its *perspective*), or this process is at risk of involution and finally defeated, as much due to external factors (attack by the bourgeois state coalitions) as to internal ones (the lingering-on of counter-revolutionary material forces – economic and social). Paris 1871 and Russia 1917 are dramatic proof of this.

And so *revolutionary defeatism and internationalism*. Today the world of Capital increasingly finds itself amidst fire and flames: there is no need to make yet another list of the daily massacres that are the cause of upset and lament amongst “fi-

ne souls”, right-thinking people, wherever they are placed. What is more: in all the hotbeds releasing flames, a great deal more explosive material has accumulated – *the pre-conditions for a third world conflict*. This is why the experience and teachings gained from October 1917 are more topical than ever, because *this is what we shall have to go through once again*. And if it is not possible to prevent the outbreak of the worldwide, inter-imperialist conflict, we shall have to work to transform it into civil war to seize power. Proletarians beware: the hour of the plunge into the chasm is drawing closer and closer!

The need for the party

At this point it is superfluous to add once again that all this implies the need for the revolutionary party, the only force able to translate into the language of the present the lessons of October 1917, which are in turn a summing-up of the enormous theoretical and practical heritage of Marxism. Those lessons are valid today as tomorrow but only on condition that deeper and stronger roots are established worldwide for the political organ without which the proletariat, despite the generous battles it has always fought and always will fight as protagonist, will

never be able to get rid of the present mode of production. And this is the urgent task, that *cannot be delayed*, of all those who are driven by the monstrously destructive nature of capitalism *to sense and want communism*: not as a nostalgic slogan or rhetorical proclamation or existential need, but as a cross-generational perspective.

Our Party alone, having experienced the high and low points of events in the communist movement for over a century now, having conducted a constant and unrelenting struggle against all forms of revisionism and opportunism, weathering the manifestations of the hugest and cruellest counter-revolutions that have ever struck the proletariat, is able to translate these lessons into the revolutionary strategy necessary for victory against our historical enemy: the bourgeoisie. We alone, from the very beginning and in particular at the first, troubling signs of the future counter-revolution deep within the Russian Party and the Communist International, have led this battle right out in the open, we alone can fully lay claim to October 1917. *Not as a date in the calendar to be bowed down to in devout reverence, but as a battle cry.*

– It was easier for us to start the revolution, but it is extremely difficult to continue it and consummate it. It is terribly difficult to make a revolution in such a highly developed country as Germany, with its splendidly organised bourgeoisie, but all the easier will it be to triumphantly consummate the socialist revolution once it flares up and spreads in the advanced capitalist countries of Europe.

V. I. Lenin, July 23rd, 1918

The World of Capital Increasingly Adrift

It is a historical fact that in certain phases, after long periods of apparent inertia, the economic and social dynamics produced by capitalism itself in its most aggressive and destructive phase (that of imperialism) suddenly accelerate, with violent repercussions and unexpected breaks, coming closer and closer to the time of reckoning in the world of capitalist production and involving the world proletariat. It is too soon to tell whether we are now in one of these phases and in fact our task (*theoretical and practical, political and organizational*) must be to follow and analyse step by step the evolution of the world economic crisis, in terms of its reflections on society and the way classes (and groups and factions within them) move, operate and start to align. The fact is, and we cannot help but dwell on this, that the world economic crisis is constantly at work deep down, wearing away certainties and conventions (and, above all, those fictitious economic reserves – savings, pensions, homes – as well as the social – pensions, healthcare, education – which constituted the real illusion of all reformism), breaking down what was supposed to be solid and provoking a situation of growing uncertainty and instability in terms of hard economic facts and daily life. Observers and opinion-makers of limited intelligence fall back on medical-psychiatric terminology to define the “human condition” today: they speak of the “onset of global anxiety”, “globalization and crises of rejection”. This is a sorry demonstration of the depths to which the caste of power ideologists has sunk! Behind this demonstration of historical, theoretical and conceptual ignorance loom deep tension and lacerations, which affect and cause harm to our proletarian class itself.

We shall attempt to give a very schematic outline of some of these scenarios, starting out from some of the most prominent events over the past few months.

The struggle of French workers against the Loi Travail

Between March and June in France a widespread and militant movement developed against the so-called ‘Loi Travail’. Very similar to the Italian ‘Jobs Act’, it provided for a series of legal measures regarding worker/employee/State relations and implying widespread precariousness, licence to lay off workers, overall deterioration of working conditions. There were large demonstrations in all France’s central squares, violent clashes between demonstrators and the “forces of law and order”, casualties and arrests and, on all sides, the usual complaints raised against the “violence of the ‘casseurs’”. Control by the Intersindacale trade unions (the equivalent of the Italian Triplice) was cast iron, as further demonstration of the role the official unions are increasingly assuming: that of *police officers in civvies*. We enthusiastically welcomed the French workers’ *will to fight back* which, especially in some vital sectors, such as transport and the oil refining industry, was considerable: but we never concealed how complete this *union control* was at all times, and how the widespread anger of the proletariat was skilfully contained and channelled, diluting and weakening it over time, by patchy and occasional strikes (the last demonstration in mid-June represented the movement’s death chant and was accompanied by the union proposal to submit the law to a... people’s referendum!). Something very similar had taken place in Italy in 1992, when, during a speech

in Florence, at the peak of a period of struggle, the secretary general of the CGIL, Bruno Trentin, was met by a shower of nuts and bolts hurled at him: with perfect skill the union had allowed the workers’ anger to let off steam, containing it, surveilling it and repressing it as far as necessary – since then at the most eggs have been thrown (not even bad eggs!)... meanwhile, the French executive has shown what we mean by “democratic dictatorship”: without any violation of the Constitution – indeed by applying it – it has used decrees, like any, self-respecting strong executive, to override, stone-faced, the cowardly (and imbecile) democratically-elected parliament – the same practice applied by all the executives that have followed one another in Italy since the end of the ‘80s right up to the latest Renzi. Once the anger has let off steam, silence follows: and in this silence the law... became law. In our immediate comment on the demonstrations, we emphasized that a very different sort of violence and determination are needed, even at the level of economic claims alone, to crush the ruling class and the State representing it; that the Intersindacale (led by a CGT trying to recover from loss of members) did a perfect fire-fighting job; and that no confidence of *any sort* should be placed in it, as, on the contrary, the so-called “extremists” did, with differing but convergent tones of voice: from the grizzling Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste to the various Trotskyite groups, from the Maoists of Voie Prolétarienne to the Marxist-Leninists of the Rassemblement Organisé des Communistes Marxistes Léninistes – all in the end with a conciliatory attitude towards the CGT and ready to acknowledge its positive guiding role in union conflicts. On the other hand, there



was not even the slightest attempt to work on the hard task of giving back to our class its own independence in terms of organization and content, as opposed to relying on parties and unions with a history of compromises with the ruling class and its State. (see our article "Dalla Francia. Breve nota sulle manifestazioni contro la 'Loi Travail'", *Il programma comunista*, n. 3/2016).

Great Britain's exit from the EU

As we all know, the result of the referendum of 23rd June was in favour of Great Britain's exit from the EU. To the disconsolation of politicians, economists, opinion-makers, and panic on the Stock Exchange and in financial centres: what on earth happened? Is this sort of thing possible? And now? What will become of Europe? Our considerations take an entirely different direction. First of all, the outcome of the referendum shows that the world economic crisis weighs on the ruling class itself: that it creates splits within the bourgeoisie itself, lacerated by different opinions in the vain attempt to face up to the collapse of its own mode of production – isolation instead of openness, prohibition instead of liberalism, and so on. On the other hand, Great Britain has always occupied a peculiar position (neither inside nor outside but on the margins and looking towards the United States) in a Europe that has never existed as a political subject and which, under pressure from the crisis, is gradually unravelling, revealing itself as none other than a "common market" of quarrelsome competitors. The social situation in Britain has been critical for some years now, beneath the shiny surface of the large towns (reserved for a 'happy few'): inside or outside the EU, little will change for the British proletariat, which has been hammered by one government or the other for decades thanks to the straitjacket

of the unions and the Labour Party (with the laughable 'left wings' à la Jeremy Corbyn: another hero for so many petit bourgeois in search of a myth, about to topple together with Alexis Tsipras of Syriza and Pablo Iglesias of Podemos!). Their conditions can only get worse: not, however, because of Great Britain's exit from the EU, but because of the deterioration of the world economic crisis. Another consideration is also worth making: for some days, "the emperor was naked", i.e. the mechanism of democracy (what could be more democratic than a popular referendum, in which everyone – none excluded – gives his/ her own opinion?!) revealed its fallacies. Indeed, in the (few) days following, many people – observers and politicians – asked themselves: "what's the sense, then, of leaving such a delicate matter up to the 'opinion of the man/woman in the street', when it isn't even clear to us, the 'professionals', the 'experts'? (Particularly if the result contradicts all expectations!). Oh dear, but isn't that how democracy works? Doesn't it delude us that all of us, all equal before the law, with our consciences and knowledge (as well, of course, the good God!) are capable of saying what we think about anything – as long as we inform ourselves...? That is how the beloved and blessed "democracy" works: knowing full well that consciences and knowledge are firmly in the hands of those who hold the power (schools, churches, mass communications, social customs, economic interests, etc.). This is what "armoured democracy", or, perhaps better, "democratic dictatorship" is: the use of statistical consensus to authorize the rule of the bourgeoisie.

(see our article "Something Is Rotten in the United Kingdom!", *The Internationalist*, n3/June 2016).

Growing social tension in the USA

"Racial issue" or "social issue"? The cold-blooded murders of African Americans by the "forces of law and order", which become increasingly numerous year by year in the United States, and the isolated episodes of individual responses that have taken place since last July (such as that of the Dallas gunman who shot five policemen dead), have held the stage for some time in the mass media, later to be pushed back into the background of other "sensational" news. But the question remains dramatically in the forefront. There is a single answer: *a social issue*, or – better still – *a class issue*. The conditions of an enormous sector of the US proletarian class, mostly consisting of African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, Latin-Americans in general, with a considerable number of "poor whites", is worsening from year to year, despite the constant, bombastic announcements of "recovery" which, particularly on the occasion of the revolting electoral fairground, are launched by all representatives (from the right or the "left") of the US ruling class. Unfortunately an individual answer offers no prospects but merely amounts to suicide, as we stress in the press release printed in this issue in Italian. Very different prospects must open up once again for the US proletariat, if it wishes to retaliate against the attack of capital, overcoming all the splits that have constantly and skillfully been fuelled over the past century and a half by the ruling ideology: i.e. that the problem is in fact "racism". "Racism" is one of the tools bourgeois power uses to rule the proletarian class (one of the most disgusting ideological and material tools brought into play) and this is true for the United States as for any other country, immersed in the disintegration that marks the

world economic crisis. The prospect must once again become that of *organization on class bases* and certainly not on the basis of race, in order to respond to state attack and repression *at all levels*. And on the subject of immature and counter-productive responses, there is another issue that is gradually emerging and also belongs to the strategies of class rule: several times, in the agitated discussions and reactions following the Dallas shootings, the phantom of the "separate black nation" has returned to haunt us. Vague and absurd as the project may sound, it has a long history behind it that we shall very soon be reconstructing, partly in order to show its tragic responsibilities, dating back, once again, to the counter-revolution that has weighed on the world proletariat like a ton of bricks for over ninety years now.

(see our article "USA: Bolle sociali (e non solo finanziarie) in vista", *Il programma comunista*,

no.1/2015)

"Coup and "counter-coup" in Turkey

Here is yet another demonstration of how the world economic crisis provokes splits in the ruling class itself, setting bourgeois factions against one another in more or less open conflict. The theme will have to be taken up and studied more: but the serious danger is that, certainly not too far in the future, the proletariat will be caught up in this conflict that is not its own and that in this way the tremendous virus of nationalism will be revived. As happened in Egypt, for example (with the skillfully manipulated split between the pro- Al Sisi factions and pro- Morsi factions), this "partisan side-taking" has profound effects on our class: it has tragic consequences, mutilates the ability to fight and prepares even darker, future "alignments". History teaches us this and contemporary reality provides tragic evidence of it,

with the inter-imperial wars that are causing bloodshed in large areas of the world (from Libya to Afghanistan, including Syria) and that are already encouraging, in the same variegated world of "left-wing" counter-revolutionary opportunism, *the spread of nationalism*.

In the meantime, the repeated acts of, more or less "isolated", terrorism have almost made us forget the daily massacre of thousands upon thousands of civilians in Libya, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and the desperate flight of as many thousands of civilians from the theatres of war across lands and seas that all too often turn into coffins. *This is the highest expression of the civilization of capital!* From every pore, it exudes violence, which swells, more alarmingly day by day, in the world of capitalist production. The wars being fought between imperialisms for the control of energy sources, market competition and the geopolitical redrafting of entire areas,



are assuming catastrophic dimensions and laying the bases for a new, generalized world war in this very European "jungle of nationalisms". The very function of Isis (a band of mercenaries in the pay of one power or another, operating to destabilize both the already destabilized Middle East and a Europe shaken by considerable nationalistic and chauvinistic tremors) is becoming clearer and clearer: in particular when, in the latest episodes of bloodshed, its attraction is felt by the individual, fragile, blackmailable worker, sensitive to slogans that have been purposely created to influence and mobilize. Quite another thing from the still open "national issue", quite a different thing from "anti-imperialism" as some naive souls would have it! The deadly fever of the world economic crisis is making itself felt here, too! Just add a Far East in the process of re-arming and a sinking Latin America, and the picture is all too elo-

quent.

Faced with this picture, we cannot help but insist on the need for the only tool capable of preparing our class to fight back, rebel and pose the question of power: the *revolutionary party*. It may seem a mere refrain, a hypnotic mantra. It is not. Either we grasp the urgency, *starting right now*, of reinforcing and establishing international roots for our party, with all its now century-old experience of battle against the opportunism, revisionism and counter-revolution that, in all their manifestations, have massacred the world proletariat. Or else, tomorrow it really will be too late: the capitalist mode of production will celebrate its bloody feasts by setting proletarians one against another, in national alignments (with their relative ideological and religious guises) and, in the umpteenth attempt to get rid of

excess of production and start operating at full speed once again, they will lead these proletarians to slaughter, to the extent of threatening the very existence of humanity itself.

This is the need and urgency that the younger generations of proletarians must become aware of (*and it is the task of the revolutionary party to work towards this*), vulnerable and inert as they are at present, fascinated by false myths and drugged by thousands of virtual incitements, paralyzed by a thousand fears and a thousand illusions, the victims of a dominant ideology that is increasingly crude, rotten and unsuccessful. They must understand that the only way is to work, with dedication and passion, clarity and continuity, *for and within the party – our party*.

August-September 2016

JUST OUT! ISSUE N° 1 OF OUR GERMAN PUBLICATION "KOMMUNISTISCHES PROGRAMM". IT CONTAINS:

- Editorial
- Die „Krise“ des deutschen Sozialstaates
- Die kommunistische Kritik des Antifaschismus
- Die Laufbahn des Weltkapitalismus – Einführung
- Die Laufbahn des Weltkapitalismus – Weiterführung
- Deutsche Bahn 2017 – Auf Streik von Anfang an verzichtet
- Verdi sabotiert den Arbeitskampf der Bodendienstarbeiter_innen an den Berliner Flughafen
- Italien: Neue Angriffe auf die Basisgewerkschaft S.I. Cobas und die Kämpfe der Arbeiter
- Verfaulte Überreste der sogenannten „Nationalen Frage“
- Der G20-Gipfel – eine Riesenshow demokratischer Illusionen
- 1917-2017. Es lebe der rote Oktober! Es lebe die zukünftige proletarische Revolution!

The Rot is Growing in the United Kingdom

A year ago in the pages of this newspaper (and later in our English-language publication, *The Internationalist*), we called attention to the serious social situation in Great Britain, particularly with regard to the “housing issue” and the anti-proletarian measures being passed or planned¹. This was well before the “Brexit” case hit the scene in Europe. In addition, in the previous pages, we stressed the fact that the predictable decline in the living and working conditions of British proletarians (whether natives or immigrants) should not be attributed to Great Britain leaving Europe (i.e. to Brexit as such) but to the complex of measures that every national capital is obliged to adopt to deal with its own crisis – measures amongst which “Brexit” itself can be counted. What has actually changed since then? Not much really, apart from social contradictions becoming even more acute: even the mere insistence with which some local institutions in London (such as, to quote one example, the local library of Tower Hamlets, one of London’s traditionally proletarian areas most affected by the relentless march of property and financial speculation – so-called *gentrification*) are returning to the burning issue of housing, with ample documentation on the squat movements, which were particularly widespread and combative in the 1920s and ‘30s, but also later in the 1960s and 1970s.

Meanwhile, on the British horizon, after the government reshuffle, with Cameron passing the buck to a champion of anti-proletarian

conservatism like Theresa May (not by chance the previous government’s Home Secretary), after the feverish excitement pervading the “left” (including the “more extreme” faction) in view of the “re-election yes, re-election no” of Jeremy Corbyn, that champion of maximalism and opportunism typical of Labour, and with the usual (but not only English!) succession of scandals and mini-scandals, it seems as though the situation has frozen in apprehensive expectation of “what Brexit is really going to mean.” Very little news filters through as to the real problems of the English proletariat, with the exception of the brief and limited strikes (strictly articulated) in one sector or another – one railway company or another, or else in the London tube.

Two mobilisations, however, were of some interest, between the end of August and mid-September 2016³, particularly in terms of their significance: the protest against “zero-hours contracts” and that of the “young medics”. We shall start with the latter, since it marks the ripening of the umpteenth fracture in a sector of the middle classes up to now protected and privileged (and it should be remembered that the health service, at present totally adrift, was the country’s pride and joy, at least up until quite recently). The “young medics” came out determinedly against seriously penalizing plans (longer hours, reduced salaries) and were attacked on all sides, accused of “abandoning patients” and threatened with being struck off the national List of Registered Medical

Practitioners – an old, old story constantly repeated (remember the long season of struggles by the hospital workers in Italy in the ‘70s?). The protest, which also saw a clear stand-off between institutional unions and grassroots organisms, is significant because it shows once again how the “half classes” (this is what we prefer to call them, to emphasize both the intermediate position of these social layers and their eternal wavering, at both a material and an ideological level, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat) are increasingly experiencing the erosion and trampling of their “old” privileges, with the moment when they slither down into the ranks of the proletariat drawing ever closer (oh, terror!). The leading component in the second protest, against “zero-hours contracts”, was the variegated universe of the precariously employed, identical to the one that has spread to countries everywhere over the last few years, under the pressure of the capitalist crisis: basically those “on-call contracts” that place precarious workers at the complete disposition of the employer, with no certainty of continuity and at starvation wages (no use wasting any more words to recall who we’re talking about: in Italy the recent protests of the young, super-precarious *Foodora* workers gave them a brief moment of visibility). According to a note from the Office for National Statistics (reported in the *Guardian* on 8/9/2016), the number of workers on “zero-hours contracts” had grown by 100 thousand units in the pre-



NOTES

[1] See “Something Is Rotten in the United Kingdom. Notes on the Social Situation”, *The Internationalist*, n.3/2016.

[2] The following figures and information were taken from the British press in September 2016, in particular from *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *The Financial Times*.

[3] The following figures and information were taken from the British press in September 2016, in particular from *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *The Financial Times*.

vious twelve months, rising for the first time to over 800 thousand units; the same figures show that in November 2015, around 1 million, 700 thousand contracts of this type were in operation – proof of the fact that many workers are obliged to sign more than one “zero-hours contract” at once. It should be stressed that the issue of “zero-hours contracts” is not a distortion of the labour market, as opportunists of various origins and multi-coloured fine souls try to argue, but a *physiological aspect of work in a capitalist régime*, destined to get worse in times of crisis. It shows that our key slogan on the need to bring back militant territorial organisms is not only appropriate but charged with dramatic urgency. Only the recovery of a common battlefield, structured over the territory and embracing precarious workers and the unemployed, more or less steadily employed workers and layers of society on the path to proletarianization, and which also takes on matters like the “housing issue”, lack of safety and death in the workplace, inequality between different sectors of the proletariat (men/women, young/old, “natives”/immigrants) and so on, can hope to withstand an increasingly savage attack on living and working conditions, which also translates into a “war amongst the poor”, as well as in widespread populism and chauvinism – for which latter items Capital is exceedingly grateful.

Yet Capital does not hesitate to run round spreading anti-proletarian measures in all fields of social life. There are two significant examples. The British press has given wide coverage to the polemics on the hypothesis of reintroducing or extending Grammar Schools, those élite, post-11-Plus schools, which prepare them for a university education. Access to these schools is firmly controlled by strict tests – they are “élite” schools which, wi-

thout completely disappearing, had nonetheless been virtually replaced in recent years by Comprehensive Schools, socially more open and with a wider range of studies available. Reintroducing them would mean creating a divide between those who can afford them and those who can’t, and between first-class and second-class education. Of course we make no difference between a type of school that is considered “better” and one considered “worse”, or between private schools or state schools and so on, since we know that in any case “schools” are one of the places and tools through which the dominant ideology is formed and handed on. But the “case” is interesting because – yet again – it serves the ruling class demagogically to reassure the “half classes” who are running out of oxygen, if only by reinforcing the ideological sense of class, eroded by the materiality of progressive proletarianization.

The other example is even more eloquent. In last year’s article quoted above, we recalled that the ruling class was preparing more and more tools for dealing with possible scenarios of social conflict, thanks to increasingly repressive measures in relation to trade unions, all aiming to rein in any struggles that might develop and consequently spontaneous organization by the proletariat. Once again, this is common practice in all States. A recent measure, regarding the equipment of London’s Metropolitan Police Force (a pilot project that could be extended to the whole of the nation’s police force) caused a sensation: the introduction of “spit hoods”, white hoods made of breathable fabric that can be placed over the heads of arrestees or suspects to ... avoid them spitting at the poor officers (so vulnerable to ... intemperance) or trying to bite them! Spit hoods now join truncheons, handcuffs, arm and leg clamps and

pepper sprays in the police armoury: when can we expect the trussing to start? The online edition of the Guardian, 29th August, reports that in the middle of the previous year spit hoods were put to use in 513 (experimental!) cases which also regarded young people around 13 years of age (some of whom disabled) or over-seventy-year-olds...

Meanwhile, the situation of the homeless is becoming more and more of a tragedy, in particular that of the weaker and more vulnerable sectors, such as single mothers and children: whilst the inner-city areas in the big cities are like open building yards, yielding the most amazing and horrendous luxury architecture, the numbers of new “social rent” apartments financed by the Government continue to dwindle, dropping to fewer than 10 thousand last year, or 70% fewer than five years previously (*The Observer*, 18/9/2016); at the same time, the rents in “affordable rent” apartments have gone up and the combination of the two “phenomena” is producing authentic ghettoization by age ranges, with over-50-year-olds gradually being pushed out towards the suburbs or to rural areas and the younger generation struggling to get by in houses where the rents are constantly on the rise (+5,2% compared to 2015, right up to record figures of around 900 pounds sterling a month, in England and Wales: *The Guardian*, 9/9/2016). Then there is the truly dramatic situation of families obliged to live in “temporary accommodation”: in London alone 52 thousand family units, it appears, with a total of 90 thousand children: family units mostly consisting of single and/or pregnant mothers, as previously mentioned. The guidelines here indicate that no family unit should be housed for more than six months in this “temporary accommodation” (often commissio-



ned by the municipalities from private people with no scruples, with the foreseeable consequences resulting from overcrowding, poor hygiene and little or no maintenance, etc.). The reality is quite different, particularly in large cities like London, where it can be seen that over half of these family units remain for periods of up to two years. The consequences are easy to imagine!

Yes, the rot is growing in Great Britain and a huge broom will be needed to sweep it away. But this broom must be wielded by the revolutionary party, which has been lacking for far too long in Great Britain, as elsewhere: this is an urgent need for which the militant avant-gardes and more class-conscious proletarians will have to take responsibility without delay.

Fall 2016

In and around Turkey

“Real” or “fake” as the attempted coup d’état in Turkey and subsequent repression by Erdogan’s government (democratically elected and as such recognized by all the imperialist powers) may have been, one thing is clear: once again the hard material facts of the world economic crisis are making themselves felt within the bourgeois ruling class, too. With different implications and consequences, in Great Britain and in Turkey (to limit ourselves to just a few of the dramatic events opening this summer of 2016), there have been clashes between bourgeois factions in serious difficulty as they try to face up to an economic crisis which, in their countries as elsewhere, risks becoming – and has to some extent already become – social and political.

Turkey’s recent diplomatic dances (the tug-of-war with Europe, the truly cynical *business deal* at the cost of the migrants, the breaks and then attempted reconciliations with Russia, Israel, Syria) reveal the uncertainty in which the country’s ruling class is floundering, in an international context equally dominated by growing instability: the endless wars in Iraq, Syria, Lybia and Central Africa; the internal fractures within Europe with the conflict in Ukraine and the breakaways and nationalistic tendencies; the repositioning of NATO to the east; an explosive social situation in many Latin American countries; the increasingly keen social tensions in the United States...

The impossibility for the ruling classes in different nations to deal with the crisis except by preparing (through the constant tracing and re-tracing of precarious alliances) a new inter-imperialist world conflict

is, however, always accompanied by an intensification of anti-proletarian repression, open *democratic dictatorship* towards all those who attempt to defend their living and working conditions. Proletarians in Turkey, *of whatever origin*, like proletarians all over the world, will not only have to abandon any reactionary national prospects by breaking with their own ruling class and refusing to let themselves be harnessed to one bourgeois faction or the other. They must also turn again to posing *the issue of power* – as an objective to be reached – today the only possible means of defence from the attacks of capital, and preparing a decisive and final counter-attack for tomorrow.

But to prevent this objective from being a mere vain hope and turning into the umpteenth proletarian bloodbath, it is necessary and urgent to put down firm roots all over the world for the *revolutionary party*, arising out of a solid theoretical basis and grounded on a now century-old tradition and experience of struggle and organization. We, the International Communist Party, an extreme minority moving against the current, work towards this, in the conviction, born of facts, that this perspective is the only one able to prevent a new and devastating inter-imperialist massacre and put an end once and for all to the bloody agony of a mode of production – that of capital – which has now turned into mere destruction.

July 2016

US proletarians of all origins and colours, like proletarians everywhere in the world, are increasingly in need of the revolutionary party

The Dallas shooting (the lone gunman who, exasperated by the constant murder of black people by the police, shot 5 police officers) reveals that there are many issues here to reflect upon.

First of all, as we have stated more than once in our newspaper over the past months, referring to the cold-blooded murders by the US forces of repression, the problem is not one of race but of *class*. Racism is a tool that the ruling class has always used to divide and weaken the proletariat, setting large sectors of the population one against the other. This has happened ever since the abolition of slavery after the American Civil War (1861-1865): the relentless development of capitalism and the creation of a national market needed a scapegoat for social frustration, thus *dividing and ruling*: white workers against black workers, but also “native” workers against immigrant workers, the white, working-class aristocracy against the “poor whites” and so on. To cite another example, the “divide and rule” carried forward by the British ruling class within the English working classes against the Irish proletariat was no different: we only need read the pages that Marx and Engels devoted to this issue, insisting that the English working class could only have carried out its revolutionary role by freeing itself from anti-Irish prejudice and taking up arms against capital as a single proletarian front united in the struggle. Racism is one of capitalism’s poisonous by-products and this is why we declare openly, using a paraphrase, that “those who don’t want to talk about capitalism, can’t talk about racism”!

But the Dallas shooting also tells us (and we are once again repeating something we have been saying for months) that the social situation in the US is deteriorating rapidly, despite all the optimistic proclamations of “economic recovery” and the sickening rhetoric swamping public opinion from an election campaign that is increasingly becoming a useless and putrid democratic funfair. The “social inequalities” (the coy expression used by sociologists to avoid saying “class fractures”) are becoming clearer and clearer and inevitably hit the more exposed strata of society, that have always been used as scapegoats. The city ghettos, large and small, but also the “poor white” neighbourhoods and communities and those of more or less recent immigrant proletarians (in the states of the south-west the more or less clandestine immigrants from Central and South America live and work in inhuman conditions) are tragic receptacles of poverty, filled with an anger that has no outlet, except in desperate, individual action.

Faithful to our tradition as communists, we do not condemn these acts. However, we once more repeat loud and clear that this social deterioration (which is not a pathology of capitalist society but the very *physiology* of it) is destined to grow even keener, preparing the ground for many other tragedies; that the need for self-defence must once again be recovered on a daily basis in every demonstration and on every occasion for struggle; that it is through the radicalisation of positions and the *practical* reaffirmation of revolutionary, anti-patriotic and anti-nationalist defeatism, that the *issue of power* must again be posed; that, *faced with all this*, the need for the revolutionary party, able to unite the proletarian classes beyond confines of origin, language and colour, is felt even more keenly. The true battle against racism takes place during proletarian struggles, in the picket lines and in the block on goods and production, when the economic struggle in defence of living and working conditions becomes the training ground and premise for revolutionary political battle.

The answer certainly will not come from petit-bourgeois, reformist and pacifist formations, like the much celebrated “Black Lives Matter”, which proposes (as can be seen on their website) to affirm and lay claim to “the Black folks’ contributions to this society”! “This society”, which is grounded on capital, *must be destroyed* and in order to destroy it, the mobilisation of a united proletarian class guided by its revolutionary party is needed. This is what we are working towards, well aware that we are a minority force but also that there is no other way out of the horror – of war and misery, racism and exploitation, oppression and repression – of “this society”.

July 2016

Also see, in “*The Internationalist*”, n.3/2016:

“From the USA: Ferguson (Missouri), Again”

“From the Rebel Ghetto of Baltimore, Let the Battle Cry Again Be: ‘Workingmen of All Countries, Unite!’”

Recent articles on the social situation in the United States, published in “*il programma comunista*”:

“USA: Bolle sociali (e non solo finanziarie) in vista”, no.1/2015

“USA: La guerra in casa”, no.2/2015

“Dal ghetto in rivolta di Baltimora, il grido torni a essere ‘Proletari di tutto il mondo, unitevi!’”, no.3/2015

“Di nuovo Ferguson (Missouri)”, no.5/2015

“Once-Upon-a-Time America”. But is it really so?

Overcoming an instinctive rejection crisis, we return to the subject of post-election USA, which has confirmed what we have been arguing for decades about the role of “armoured democracy” (or “democratic dictatorship”) in drugging the “sovereign people” and pushing through what are – with all due contradictions – the primary needs of Capital – a topic already discussed with regard to Brexit¹. The generalized chaos, the challenge to situations that seemed fully consolidated, the somersaults and about-turns in domestic and international politics (together with the many, now “chronic” wars scattered around the world) dominate the international panorama: evident proof to us that, beyond any rashly optimistic judgements from the “experts”, the economic crisis is pursuing its course undeterred and, above all, preparing new upheavals. As to what is going on in the United States – still the most powerful imperialism, battered and breathless as it may be – this is revealing, since it represents none other than the amplification of dynamics destined to develop (or become more radical) elsewhere.

It's as well to repeat ourselves

Firstly, let us recall what we wrote at the time when Barack Obama was elected: “We communists have always denied a) that individuals make history and b) that it is the institutional offices (such as the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister or anyone else) or democratic institutions (such as Parliament, rather than the local council) that “do politics” – being offices and institutions whose only purpose is,

perhaps to amplify, like actual sound systems, a purely ideological line of “national” consensus, wholly functional to the interests of capital. It was never the demagogic oratories of Mussolini from the balcony in Piazza Venezia or Roosevelt’s ‘fire-side talks’ on the radio (or, today, the parliamentary debates or TV talk shows, often undistinguishable one from the other) that ‘make history’ – as far as capital is concerned, history, far less noisily but far more materially, was ‘made’ and is ‘made’ by the banks, the financial institutions, the cartels, the trusts ... and, at the given moment, by the cannons. But the words and the speeches served and still serve to fill people’s brains: to reassure them and make them exalt, when and to the extent that it is necessary to smooth the path of the nation’s capital. Now, in the midst of its crisis, the United States (as any other country undergoing a crisis) is also experiencing the crisis (domestic and foreign) of the ideological discourse of national consensus: that ideological glue capable of holding together the ‘body of the nation’, denying the existence of antagonistic or incompatible interests and preparing it to swallow its bitter medicine, whilst leading it by hand towards a progressive series of outside conflicts, first “cultural” and ideological, then diplomatic and finally in the form of outright warfare. Succeeding in making the ideological glue efficient on a wide scale again – this is the problem that faces the US ruling class [...]”².

It was 2008 and, drugged by Obamaian fine feelings, the “sincere democrats” never dared (or could) take a look below the surface, where

things really mature and start to go on the boil.

The same article continued: “In the meantime, the new President mixes the ingredients for the glue: one for the hare and one for the hounds. And there is no doubt that he will have to pass measures to ‘re-launch the economy’ (the poor automobile!), to ‘cure social ills’ (the disastrous healthcare! the growing poverty! the increasing unemployment!), ‘to reorganize the finance and banking system’ (mortgages! speculation! shaky institutions!). He will have to do all this to avoid social rebellion. But (and here the ‘But’ is truly monumental!) he will have to get hold of the money for all this: and he will get hold of it by a) greater exploitation of the American proletariat (who will thus lose three times as much as what is demagogically conceded to them), b) an increasing internal debt (which will be offloaded onto all the countries that are already financing it now: virtually the whole world, including ... the suckers!), c) growing commercial, and thus also military, aggression. And it is here that the glue will have to prove itself, both at home and abroad”.

Did that glue prove strong enough? Only up to a point and only for certain sectors of America’s (and by reflection the world’s) population. In the meantime, however, the crisis continued to consume space after space, removing brick after brick from that fine construction of smiling optimism (“Yes, we can!”). Thus, the day after Trump’s election, whilst the world seemed to divide into the “prostrate” (anti-Trump) and the “exultant” (pro-Trump), while all this was happening, we wrote:



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[1] See above “The World of Capital Increasingly Adrift”.

[2] “The New US President and Suckers International Ltd”, Internationalist Papers, n. 14/2009. Also on our website: <http://www.partitocomunistainternazionale.org/images/pdf/ip/IP-14-2009.pdf>.

"Will the prostrate ever ask themselves how eight years of the much celebrated and much loved Man of Providence can possibly have left us with a scenario of such profound ill-being, of such furious resentment? Will they still, timidly, try to pull out of the top hat the health reform and immigration reform, those two massive con tricks (as we demonstrated at the time, figures in hand), aiming to provide a palliative for the minute sector of the half classes, terrorised at the idea of being plunged deeper into the abysses, and leaving the others to struggle in the mud and shit of daily life? Will they ever understand that this is how, once again, Capital has celebrated its own pomp and splendour beneath the banner of divide et impera, at the same time accumulating contradictions that it is incapable of managing? Some fine spirit (some philosopher, some columnist) has commented meekly: 'We are divided...We are two nations....'! Well, how about that! And the exultant – what will they say when the same higher interests of Capital rage against them, further massacring entire regions, towns and cities that have already been massacred, already left to rust, to dry up or drown? When, after the Big Words and the chorus girls are over, 'their' Man (or Woman) of Providence, will have to come to terms with what is dictated to him (or her) by the impersonal and unavoidable laws of Capital, and at that point will only be able to spread his (or her) arms, invoking the supreme good of the Nation, the Fatherland, the National Economy and run off to find a new temporary Enemy?"³.

The Emperor has no clothes on

And so the umpteenth US election

fairground has come to an end amidst enthusiasm and consternation. And it was, indeed, a fairground, even more so than usual: exchanges of low accusations between candidates, suspicions of cheating and foreign interference, a "people's" vote in favour of the democratic candidate (65 million votes against 62) overturned by the outcome of the Electoral College (the "presidential electors"), who gave 304 votes to the republican candidate and 227 to the democratic one, and we shall leave aside other aspects relating to – so to say! – custom. This would suffice to show what "democracy" is made of!

The new President is thus the ... cherry on the cake ... Do you really still believe in it all? Even after so-called Brexit and Donald Trump? To us there are no surprises. As always, Capital has made its demands felt. The cautious measures – actually, cautious only up to a point – adopted by the previous administration (which also responded to the needs of Capital) were insufficient to put back on the rails an economy and a society that continue to be seriously out of breath and undergoing a perennial crisis: whole regions out of kilter both economically and socially, a problematic labour market, growing social tension (have we already forgotten the ongoing murders of young black people by the "forces of law and order"? And what is on the boil in the "rust belt" made up of out-of-use factories and communities abandoned to their own devices, where the highest rates of suicides and deaths due to drug and alcohol abuse are recorded?), an unsatisfactory performance on an international panorama marked by instability and growing competition... A change of direction was re-

quired, new aggressiveness, new decision-making.

Enough intellectual and multicultural "fine feelings"! The upper middle classes have had their little rewards, both material and ideological: now they can lie down again and keep quiet! Now what is of concern are the chronically sick, the middle and lower-middle class (including the white, working-class aristocracy) who have seen the hands of the clocks advancing and their money in the bank retreating, who still have the nightmare of the mortgage and all those "financial products" that have continued to pop up like mushrooms over recent decades – before and after the 2008 crisis. They must be brought back into line, neutralized with a massive dose of populist demagoguery, pride in the "stars-and-stripes" ("America First!": but, with a different subject, isn't this the slogan of all ruling classes?!) and appeals to gut-feeling, with loud shouting, inspired by the bars-beer-and-ballerinas, against the establishment, the Government, Wall Street... the repertory is vast, there is no lack of actors: and, if they, too, fail to play their part properly, well, there's always a change of guard at the ready. Saint Democracy!

So much for the ideology. But democracy and the needs of Capital go arm in arm: does it come as any surprise, then, if "Trump's troupe" consists exclusively of army men, billionaires, the ex-CEOs of multinationals...? All hard at their good (super-paid) work as communicators, door-to-door salespeople, the loudspeakers of the "superior demands of the Nation". As mentioned, the world scenario is uncertain and there's no more need of bullshit: what's needed is muscles! "But," some may ask, "how do we explain



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[3] See "The Prostrate and the Exultant; or, the New US President and the Convenient Idiots",

<http://www.partitocomunistainternazionale.org/index.php/en/2048-the-prostrate-and-the-exultant-or-the-new-us-president-and-the-convenient-idiots>.

the bewilderment running through the ranks of the Republican Party, too, or some sectors of big business and the media? (Wall Street, nonetheless, is cheering – for the moment). Again, does this come as any surprise? It's the sign that we have been indicating for quite some time: under the pressure of a crisis that is proceeding along its own path, the contradictions (including those within every national capital) are multiplying and growing deeper and, most important, the ruling class is increasingly less able to manage them: to control the Sorcerer's Apprentice. If you like, the boorish vulgarity of a Trump is a revelation: a ruling class incapable of "generating" anything other than this sort of figure as its representative – its spokesperson – why, this is a ruling class fit for the junkyard!

On the other hand, this issue is not of interest to the United States alone, though inevitably the strongest imperialism lays down the law in this field, too: the whole world is undergoing upheaval and as contrasts become keener the ideas of the national ruling classes on how to manage the crisis become more and more confused and the "political caste" distinctly reveals that it is the offspring of the social parasitism that always accompanies capitalism's imperialist phase. Everyone struggles to find the "recipe" but there is no "recipe": the study on the "course of capitalism" that we are publishing demonstrates this, figures in hand. Suffice it to think of the continual wavering between free trade and protectionism, the incessant polemics accompanied by threats and retorts regarding customs duty (other peoples'), the game of this evening's alliances and sympathies, which are already being

questioned the next morning, the constant, and increasingly worn recourse to the demagoguery of "all against all" (today the term "populism" is fashionable: but in actual fact it's an age-old beast, if anything rendered more vicious with the passing of time)...

How long is all this going to last? Until it becomes necessary to play the final hand: that of actual preparation for a new, generalized conflict, no longer local or confined to one area, but worldwide (and in fact the arms industry is doggedly pursuing its course). At this point, faced with the "Enemy of the Hour", the ruling class will be obliged to close ranks and bring itself to order (above all imposing discipline!), showing a single face – that of open anti-proletarian repression, at home and in the theatres of war.

In the meantime, under an increasingly naked (and crude) democracy, we proceed down a path consisting of accelerating processes and intensification of measures. Some now speak openly of "fascism": but what has not been noted is that "fascism" was already there, disguised and made up as "democracy". And it was acting undisturbed, since it was and is "democratic", it was and is acceptable – indeed, necessary. It came into and comes into the normal course of things.

"The Emperor has no clothes on!" shouted the boy in the fairy tale. "Democracy has no clothes on!" we say: and it is increasingly revealing its true face, what it is really made of.

"American values"? "The Statue of Liberty"?

"Continuity?" the "sincere democrat" will ask, scandalized. Yes, continuity, as becomes evident if we

look beyond the empty formulae and thundering rhetoric. Let us give just one example, regarding immigration and the measures for containing it that have been causing such an uproar ever since Trump took up the presidency: the famous wall with Mexico, deportations, the black lists, the bans on entry for the citizens of certain "Muslim countries", etc. One forgets only too easily (the other face of "democratic right-thinking" is in fact rapid memory loss) that half of that wall already existed, having been built and perfected, using sophisticated tools, by all the presidencies of the past fifteen years (Obama's included); that deportations have never ceased over all these years; that the much-celebrated Reform of Immigration "legalized" a situation that regarded only half of illegal immigrants and even in that form had strong class prejudices (in practice it legalized the positions of those who could afford it: i.e. certain petit-bourgeois sectors)⁴. And so on. This is the continuity. Not wanting to realize that processes are accelerating and measures are being intensified means obstinately trying to imagine that, in the tumultuous and anarchical path of the capitalist mode of production, particularly when hit by an economic crisis like the one we have been experiencing for decades now, harmonious phases are to be found, miraculous and pacific intermezzos, the placid suspension of time: thanks to one Man (or Woman) of Providence...

"Once-Upon-a-Time America," read the headlines of the Italian, "left-wing" daily, *Il Manifesto*, on 29 January 2017: as if "once upon a time" on the other side of the Atlantic (or Pacific, accordingly), there had been a "golden age" or at



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[4] In this respect, see again the analysis we provided in the article "USA. Immigration Reform: new bait for the geese", *Il programma comunista*, no.2/2013. The same argument applies for healthcare reform: see "USA. Healthcare Reform: the umpteenth scam for proletarians", *Il programma comunista*, no.4/2010.

least a rosy age to look back on nostalgically. For his part, at his leave-taking, when responding to Trump's heavy-hitting declarations, Obama (the good cop, alternating with the bad cop!) urged people not to stray from... "American values". Right then, let's take a closer look at this facile democratic rhetoric. Has there ever been, in the history of North America from the 1600s onwards, an age in which society, divided into classes, failed to make its brute power felt? In which the capitalist mode of production, having put down its roots *ex novo* in the continent, failed to lord it over peoples and classes? For the time being, let us leave aside the genocide of the native people and the horrors of slavery, which are all, however, to be attributed to the tumultuous and ruthless history of how capitalism took root in those lands. We can even start from the end of the Civil War (1865), by which the process of political and economic detachment of the New World from the Old World was completed. It must be remembered that behind the rhetoric of "free the slaves", stood the necessity for big, industrial capital to have at hand, within a capitalist market that now extended across the whole of the North American continent, a "free" labour force: free, that is, to be hired and fired, drawn to wherever capital wanted it, blackmailed and liable to be blackmailed, mobile and "without ties" apart from those of the market laws. And this "liberation" transformed the ex-slaves into salaried slaves in the fields and in the cities. And from this moment onwards came the real start (doors flung wide open) of the great flux of immigration at the service of US capitalism's overwhelming development, which in the space of just over three decades was able to overtake the, by then, aging economic predominance of Great Britain. Yes, immigrants

welcomed with open arms... We've read and heard it over and over between January and February. "That was America! A country that welcomed and didn't turn away!"

But, oh suckers! Those twenty-one million Italians, Spaniards, East Europeans, Turks, Cypriots and so on, who entered the United States between the end of the 1800s and the 1920s, what did they do in the cities and towns of the east, the west, the north and the south? They laboured fifteen hours a day, men, women, children and old people, in factories and "sweat shops", in unhealthy buildings, massacred by consumption, the savage pace of work, accidents in the work place, fires, sometimes fighting amongst themselves over a piece of bread but more often fighting back magnificently even though in desperate political isolation, with strikes lasting weeks and months, with open fights against the legal and illegal gangs of entrepreneurial and state repression, to defend and attempt to better their living and working conditions. "Once-Upon-a-Time America": but this is what America was for the immigrants – whether they came from Europe or from Central and South America or Asia. They were useful: they were commodities, they provided labour from which profit could be extracted. Not exactly a "golden age" for the immigrants! "Golden" was what the age was for capital.

Over those few days when yet another ramshackle spokesperson of US capital announced a ban on entry for citizens of a certain number of "Muslim countries", there was an indignant outcry of: "What?! And the Statue of Liberty, those words engraved on the plaque at its base: 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, etc...'? What has become of that America?". Well, let's take a clearer look beyond the raised torch. Let's remember what

stands behind it, because this is exemplary of the whole of the "immigration issue". The Statue of Liberty, with its powerful symbolic significance that has never ceased to exert itself right up to today, was inaugurated in 1886 (and the plaque with the famous lines of poetry was added to the base in 1903). Between 1881 and 1920, around twenty-one million immigrants entered the United States. BUT... only two years before the inauguration of that "symbol of freedom and welcome", Congress had approved a law integrating previous legislation (and that would be renewed and made permanent in 1903): the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1884 explicitly banned any further entries into the United States by Chinese workers (the only "categories" exempt from the law regarded diplomatic staff and their service personnel). A small island in San Francisco Bay was made into a "sorting centre", where immigrants from China remained for months before being sent back home: an immigration and detention centre (Italian CIE) of the time. So whilst the gates were flung open to the east, those in the west were ruthlessly sealed. "American values"?

This law (made even harsher in the mid-'Twenties, was to hold until 1943, when – for reasons strictly connected to the world war – it was abrogated: fifty-seven years of exclusion!) had dramatic consequences: there were, in fact, several tens of thousands of Chinese who had already immigrated into the United States before 1884 and were labouring in the mines of the West, building the great transcontinental railroads, working in laundries and in restaurants. They were mostly young males who, as always happens in migratory flows, trusted that in a few years they would be joined by their wives or fiancées or the rest of their family and instead,



because of that law, found themselves transformed with brutal violence into “single men” – the “bachelor society” as it was called. Exploitation, loneliness, isolation, deep traumas.

Meanwhile, the torch of the Statue of Liberty continued to shine for those who were arriving from Europe. Only up until 1924, though, when another turn of the legal screw, accompanied by vicious racist campaigns, placed a strict limit on the flow of European workers, too, especially Italians and Jews from East Europe. “American values”?

Nonetheless, for all these decades the southern gates (on the border with Mexico and thus towards Central and South America) were and remained open, with a constant flow of more desperate people in search of survival: destined to stay desperate even on US territory, oppressed by ultra-repressive laws (like those prohibiting mixed marriages!) and widespread racism. More commodities to be oppressed and transformed into profit, constantly hounded by the nightmare of the *migra* (the border police), deportation, induced illegality, poverty: a story worth examining in greater detail in the future. For now it will suffice to stress the basic truth that the “tap” of immigration into the United States has been turned continuously on and off, re-opened and closed again, affecting in turn one “national sector” or another (*divide et impera*), according to the needs of the capitalist labour market and the needs of the national economy, with the inevitable consequences and additions of ideological mobilization, to identify the “foreigner” of the moment who is to be guarded against. And, let’s take note: in some periods, such as the 1930s, the “foreigner” was the white proletarian, too, travelling around in

search of work: the “sincere democrats” could even go and read (or re-read: ah, how fragile memory is!) a novel like *The Grapes of Wrath*, to get an idea of this...

“Once-Upon-a-Time America”: where? “American values”: which?

And the US working class?

At this point we seem to hear the resentful objections of the “sincere democrats”: “Yes, but your working class has voted the racist Trump!” Fine, this allows us a last, brief consideration. Leaving aside the obvious reply: the US proletariat does not consist solely of the stratum (certainly large and growing) of “poor whites”, of white workers in the grip of despondency and themselves victims of the most bastardly and loutish racism. It consists also, and mostly, of blacks and Latinos, certainly not upholders of “white supremacy”: if anything, themselves influenced and drugged by democratic ideology! But above all let us remind ourselves that we communists do not believe that the proletariat in itself, in its DNA, contains a metaphysical, classist and revolutionary imprint: it is a class in itself, defined, statistically within the capitalist mode of production and as such subject to all the pressure and influences of the ruling ideology, the environment in which it lives and works, the family, schools, the church, the workplace, the mass media – formidable tools for the creation and spreading of mainstream ideas. The class in itself is not by nature able to identify its own historical objectives and thus its own “friends and enemies”. We communists know, by means of the theoretical analysis and practical experience coming from two centuries of cruel struggles, that the proletariat is subjected to all these influences; that only in open battle (which it is

forced into, not because of infused knowledge but because of the material need to survive) will it be able to attain some degree of awareness of its “friends and enemies”; and it is only thanks to constant contact with the revolutionary party that it will be able to express, from within its ranks, the avant-garde capable of guiding it towards the open clash with the ruling class and its political, union and military henchmen – briefly, with the capitalist mode of production.

After the election there have been ceaseless mobilizations and demonstrations, even firmly convinced ones: they are welcome but if they remain “anti-Trump” and fail to pose the objective of becoming openly anti-capitalist, they will lead nowhere, if not to more despondency, disappointment and disaggregation. Instead, what is going on in the United States (and in the world) reiterates, yet again, how urgent is the hard work of theoretically, practically and organizationally restoring the party-organ worldwide, even though it is still, for some time to come, destined to produce meagre results in the short term. Without this alternative political pole, a minority one and certainly not a mass phenomenon but totally antagonistic to electoral, democratic-reformist, pacifist practices, the proletariat in any country will always be at the mercy of all the ideological and practical forces of conservation and reaction, the most revolting that capitalism has ever generated and will generate: right up to patriotic incitements against “the Enemy”. And so, unless we work towards putting down worldwide roots for the revolutionary party, it is useless to waste tears on the “advance of the right wing”: willingly or not, we are accomplices; that is all there is to it.

NO TO THE MILITARY ADVENTURES OF "OUR" BOURGEOISIE!

Against the spread of inter-imperialist wars, for the recovery of class struggle and class organization, for the strengthening and rooting of the revolutionary party!

Military interventions led by the various national bourgeoisies are growing in number and intensity, slaughtering entire populations and devastating increasingly wide areas. The economic crisis (overproduction of goods and capital) is at the bottom of these dynamics. Under increasing pressure, the national bourgeoisies are obliged to face one another, to divide and share out geopolitical areas of influence, to obtain or defend sources of raw materials, to gain control over the modern "silk roads": oil pipelines, gas-lines, waterlines... to divide and rule. Since the end of the world's second imperialist slaughter, the cannons have never ceased to thunder, proof of the fact that the capitalist mode of production, particularly in its imperialist phase, means a state of permanent warfare, both between the inevitably competing economies and against the proletariat. Since the mid-Nineteen Seventies, the beginning of the most acute phase in the economic crisis closing the post-war cycle of accumulation, the wars between imperialisms have become all the more bitter, destructive and widespread, and are a prelude to the outbreak of a new and bloody world conflict, when made inevitable by objective conditions. Today the whole area ranging from North Africa to India through the Middle East and on to the Yellow Sea and Sea of Japan is either a single, bloody battleground or a place where tremendous explosive tension is building up.

Proletarians in all countries, with their living and working conditions (unemployment, precariousness, savage work rhythms, economic and social marginalization, tragic migration caused by wars and imbalances in production) under attack from all sides, must not and can not fall into the increasingly evident trap of "support for their own bourgeoisie", "defence of the national economy", "support for the war effort" and so on. Instead, they must start once again to recognize themselves as a force that is antagonistic to the ruling class and its needs, the State that defends its survival, gun in hand, and the institutional trade unions, which have become a pillar of this State – the only force that can really block the military efforts of its "own" bourgeoisie. Proletarians must again return to the path of open class war, striking at the ruling class where it is at its most sensitive – profit – and taking up again the classical weapons of the proletarian struggle: increasingly widespread and coordinated strike action, joint territorial organisms, more and more stable and widespread. They must overcome and wipe out all artificially created divisions within their ranks: age, gender, occupation, nationality, religion, language, etc., but also local and corporative identity, closure in the prisons of jobs, illusions of democracy and parliamentary representation, reformism and "self-management"; as well as racism, a lethal weapon directed against the proletarians themselves.

Most important, they must understand (and the facts are there for all to see) that the impossibility for the national bourgeoisies to solve their social-economic difficulties by any means other than warfare, slaughter, devastation, anti-proletarian repression is the sign that this mode of production has been at the end of its tether for a long time now. To continue keeping it alive under the illusion that it may become something other than itself, means becoming accomplices of those same wars, massacres, devastations, repressions – of an endless, obscene agony that must be stopped, understanding with clear-sighted passion the immediate need to put an end to humankind's pre-history and to a society divided into classes. Against any, even disguised form of nationalism, we must return to the path of proletarian internationalism: and this necessarily means the strengthening and worldwide rooting of the revolutionary party, the essential guide for the assault on bourgeois power, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a passage, in the end, to a classless society – to communism.

March 2016

The “Black Panther” Movement

Fifty years ago, in mid-October 1966, some young, black people from Oakland (California), exasperated by constant police violence, started to patrol the streets of the ghetto, literally applying the state law on arms, which authorized pistols and guns to be carried on condition they were in full view and not aimed at anyone. This is how the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense came into being. These were the years of the civil rights movement and the repeated rebellions in US ghettos and the Black Panthers took up the teachings of Malcolm X (who had been killed a little over a year previously), radicalising the positions that were the embryo of Black Power and combining Maoism, third-worldism and black nationalism. Very soon, the party grew to a national level with strong roots in the ghettos of the main cities (as well as in the country's prisons) and a project for organizing and creating political awareness in the lower layers of the black population, as well as for direct assistance to the community. State repression was not long in coming and proved ferocious: from infiltration by spies and ‘agents provocateurs’ to trials with prefabricated accusations, right up to the cold-blooded murder of many of the organization's militants. The effective lifespan of the Black Panther Party was relatively short – ten years or so – and its decline was caused partly by state repression and partly by its original frailty and theoretical ambiguity and the attempt to offset this by an organization in which militarism prevailed over political content. In view of the renewed talk of the Black Panther Party¹ since the summer 2016

“Dallas shootings” (when a black sharpshooter shot and killed some white policemen), we believe it may be useful to re-publish the article that appeared in issue n. 5, 1971, of our Italian newspaper *Il programma comunista*, clearly establishing the reality and limits of the movement.

As part of the information on class movements in the USA that we intend providing on a continuous basis, our first, brief account is of the Black Panthers, the movement that currently best expresses the black “community's” aspiration towards emancipation, in its daily fight against the rabid violence of the police against a sector of society without economic weight and totally left to itself like the lumpenproletariat.

The journal *Black Panther* is an accurate echo of these fights and of the problems of defence and self organization of the “community” that are involved in them. The photographs are of militants who have been killed or put in jail, the demonstrations and battles against the cops, the devastation they carry out, the battlegrounds and the enemies killed in the clashes – the “pigs” (policemen).

This fight against an enemy that always and exclusively has the face of the “pig” policeman, beyond which they fail to see the determining class and political factor, represents the true soul of the movement and also its gradual bleeding in a battle that cannot be tackled at its roots. The leaders are deliberately and repeatedly hit by the police, who look for any pretext to pick a fight that

will allow them to eliminate dangerous elements – something they have succeeded in several times – as in the attack where Bunchy Carter (a member of the “ministry of defence”) and John Higgins (“ministry of information”) were killed and where Eldridge Cleaver (who then fled to Algeria) was wounded; arrests and trials, with a class verdict of course, are the other path they follow: the leader Huey P. Newton, who is the group's theorist, Bobby Seale and Angela Davis are the best-known names to fall into the net. It appears that at present US prisons “house” at least 400 members of the *Black Panthers*. The police also attack their party headquarters, as happened during preparations for the plenary session in Philadelphia for the “Revolutionary people's constitutional convention”, or lead battles sparked off by isolated episodes, such as mistreatment of a child or a drunk, which are soon joined in by the whole neighbourhood. Open warfare is the normal way of life of a community that sees itself as a block opposed to the rest of society.

Beyond all their differences, the members of the “community” do feel united by real solidarity; the *Black Panthers* put total unity of the racial group in first place and take on the direction of even the most insignificant battles without respite – and this is a point of honour for them – even when faced with moral and legal scruples: they do not hesitate to defend “the criminal element”, seen as the result of a condition of desperate oppression. The *Black Panthers* effectively stand as the representatives of the black people as opposed to the whites. There is no doubt a theoretical limit



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[1] The New Black Panther Party, which has been active for some years now and which is also referred to when speaking of the “Dallas shootings”, has nothing to do with the original Black Panther Party, as the leaders of the BPP who are still active have repeatedly stated. We shall be returning to the NBPP in future articles.

here; but which other "Marxist" party today has the courage to defend a common "criminal", a "hooligan" and to reveal the social connections and the perverse class relations that produce these "anti-social" elements and the individual rebellions that find their sole path to salvation in joining the impetus of organized social rebellion? Their defence of action, even individual action, by members of the community represents both the *strong* and *theoretically weak* points of a movement that reaches beyond the limits of class, to arrive at those of the racial community. The *Black Panther* party does not fight for the black as an oppressed proletarian, struck down, thrown aside or impoverished in all senses, and consequently more sensitive to the propaganda of social revolution, but for the black *in general*, in order to free him or her from the oppression of white people *in general*, thus giving far more importance to ethnic than to class differences. Class war is recognized as existing only in individual communities, almost as an internal issue, and although there is open appeal to the black sub-proletariat, laying claim to their fierce fighting spirit, this only happens because the general condition of the black person is seen in terms of theirs and because this becomes the means for the emancipation of the black community outside the emancipation of capital's working class, the sole condition for the emancipation of all oppressed sectors and for overcoming the "race issue".

The black community, together with several other racial minorities, certainly is the part of American society that combines its most exploited and worst treated elements, the labourers with no attribute other than that of providing raw labour, the unemployed generated and constantly reproduced by "technological process", those on occasional

work, "the godless with no morals", the "anti-social", the "hooligans", those with the "wrong chromosome", "criminal tendencies" etc., but it should never be considered a community in itself, an independent group that can be detached from the rest of society - otherwise the result is a utopia on the one hand and a backward-looking design on the other, to say the least of it.

Black proletarians and lumpenproletariat are isolated in a struggle that is only now and again supported by other workers, in a country where white skin means preferential treatment at work and in society. And this is a privilege that at a certain stage (that of the disintegration of class organisms, political and economic) also defends itself against competition from those with the same colour skin: the inhuman law of "the fight of all against all" that rules the world of capitalism. In this situation, it is perfectly *understandable* for them not to see their white class companions as brothers, particularly since the bourgeois State has realized for a long time that stirring up racial hatred means avoiding any class solidarity that might shake its own foundations. It is also right that, in a situation like this, those who, with the excuse of the political absence of white wage workers, conclude that the black workers must "wait", meet with extreme disapproval. Militant proletarians, even in a small avant-garde, and independently of the colour of their skins, *must* take action to drag the undecided sectors along with them, they *must* demonstrate to them the need to organize in order to oppose the development of capitalism, its devastating pressure on the class that sells its labour, and to end its rule. It must make no difference to the non-racial nature of the organization itself, if that organization, due to circumstances, temporarily includes a majority of black salaried

workers.

The American working class, however, has lacked its political guidance for too long to overcome the enormous difficulties encountered in the development of a similar process without having to face a harsh struggle, not only against capital but also to decipher its own class interests and put up with painful sacrifices and attempts destined to failure. A price it will inevitably have to pay is to place itself temporarily behind ideologies that are inappropriate and not adequate for the proletarian class struggle.

The *Black Panther* movement feels the effects of this tragic isolation; their mistake is to consider it definitive at this stage. Unable to achieve, on their own, an analysis of the present situation, the fruit of a victorious counter-revolution involving a period ranging over several decades and worldwide extension, they sought an agreement with the official US "Communist" party (a party entirely anchored to the Stalinist positions and even worse), and ended up breaking with it, due to their greatly differing attitudes towards the use of violence. Their search for contacts with more militant forces then led the *Black Panthers* to meeting with the so-called "Marxist-Leninists", headed on the one hand by China and on the other by the "Third World" in general, which are apparently in the same condition, oppressed by imperialism, and can boast a national war against the United States.

With this hybrid contribution - which confuses the (more or less real) struggle for independence from imperialist bonds with that of class emancipation - the *Black Panthers* have "added to" their previous position: this is the origin of the theory that places the battle of black sub-proletarians and that of the colonial peoples on the same plane, establishing a link between the cities and



the colony on the one hand and the white city and black colony within the same State on the other, concluding that there is a "metropolitan working class and a black colonial working class" with their own, divergent interests, thus affirming the need for distinct and even opposing organization, postulating authentic solidarity between white workers and their ruling bourgeois class on the one hand and between different sectors of black-skinned people on the other. The "coloured community" struggle contrasts with the class struggle. Responsibility for this attitude is actually placed with the white proletarians, "parasites who live at the expense of humanity" and such responsibility does partially exist (seen, nonetheless through mistaken analyses and perspectives); however, it does not seem that the *Black Panthers* have ever conceived of class solidarity, except as a function of their *own* community interests, rather than making them coincide with those of the working class in general. In addition, as we have seen, the explicit appeal is not to the working class but to the Lumpenproletariat in general – black in particular: "We are Lumpen," Cleaver declared proudly, "the Lumpenproletariat consists of all those who have no secure relationship or have invested no capital in the means of production or institutions of capitalist society; who are part of a perpetual reserve in the 'industrial reserve army'; who have never worked and never will, etc. etc."

This is an attempt to adjust a theory and tactics to this social category, searching for a new strength, and a new and original path, in the very historical and social reasons for the political *impotence* of the Lumpenproletariat. So, the Lumpenproletariat, having no possibility of boycotting production by means of a strike and being forced to

fight in the streets, is seen as more revolutionary and having "no direct oppressor except perhaps for the police pigs", with whom they clash daily. And there is no awareness that this also means its inevitable defeat.

The colony-city relationship is very different: even a colony is dependent to some extent on the imperialist country, whilst at the same time producing and supplying some products, generally raw materials, and in some cases is capable of playing the role of the blackmailer, though often being ready and willing to come to agreements with imperialism on exploiting its own proletariat. It therefore does not have the characteristic of the sub-proletariat described by Cleaver as being "cut off from the economy". Quite the contrary! It complains of being excluded from world trade, which is another thing altogether. It can also be noted briefly that it is equally mistaken to apply guerrilla warfare as a form of armed struggle: for the colony this is because the battle cannot go so far as to destroy bourgeois relations but is merely a way of exerting some pressure to change the direction taken. Instead, we are well aware that the class movement has only its chains to lose and therefore organizes itself for real *war* which must lead it to the *total* control of political power (so it does not admit any local autonomy within in).

The *Black Panthers'* weak point is definitely their theory; this springs to light when considering the points on their political programme. There is not even a real *political* programme but points that are supposed to serve for mobilizing the masses. The "platform-programme" dates from October 1966 and is referred to in exactly the same form today, deserving the definition, in the most benevolent of cases, of *traditional reformism*, supported by a sort of guerrilla warfare. The ten points

claimed for the black *community* are: freedom, full employment, decent accommodation, an education suited to their own history and race (a particularly backward-looking point), exemption from military service, an end to police persecution, freedom for black prisoners, law courts with black juries and plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations (sic!) to establish the wishes of the black community; lastly they demand an end to capitalist looting and respect for the promise made a hundred years previously, i.e. the payment of 40 acres and 2 mules as compensation for work done under slavery and mass suppression (cash is also accepted!).

What is missing is a minimum of political and economic analysis of the path leading to emancipation (and what is a programme, if not the formulation of theses expressing this analysis?): there is merely a series of demands to the ruling State, conceived of as its duties, which may even lead groups of exploited people to violent action, but is unable to modify the essence of class relations, except on paper.

In this respect, it is indicative that petitions are drawn up to the United Nations which should, "on the simple basis of justice", carry out "universal action, including political and economic sanctions against the United States", guilty of genocide, as defined by the General Assembly of the UN itself on 9 December 1948. One might think it a pure and simple, though rather ingenuous manoeuvre, to make black peoples' condition "public" knowledge, but the conclusion of the platform-programme summed up above provides the fitting "theoretical" background: "all men are created equal and provided by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life and freedom, the pursuit of happiness", which involve the usual corrective interventions by the more or less so-



vereign "people" when, as in classical bourgeois democratic thought, a tyrant emerges or those rights are otherwise downtrodden.

And so the movement that fights the mystified violence of the democratic and racist State of the United States with open violence, intends acting within the confines of this very society and is reduced to claiming some degree of autonomy for its own people. Admirable as its open battle is, it still moves on an ambiguous and substantially ahistorical terrain.

It is this aspect, which is believed to be linked to the experiences of the "heroic" North-Korean and Vietnamese people, that is the backward part of the movement, experiencing crises and intrinsic contradictions as the class war develops and recovers its real content, considering the pro-

letariat its true protagonist (no matter what colour their skin!), i.e. the class that suppresses any claim to autonomy in any field, from education, to "justice", to "military service", to the family, to that of political, economic and state organization, because everything is combined in a single, irresistible movement, that of the exploited class *as a whole*, guided by a single party.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the painful experience of black proletarians and sub-proletarians, confined in a war with a racial background that sees the way to real release from their economic and social conditions barred before them, will be able to contribute its constant sacrifices of generous forces, whilst the murders by the defenders of "law and order", the scandalously

repressive trials and growing racism of the opposite side (all things that can also lead to the slow blood-letting of proletarian energies) will help open the eyes of the white and non-white proletariat and generate a political avant-garde capable of uniting all proletarians in its ranks without distinction of race, the hope and homage that we express for the good of the black people in their courageous battle and that of the whites asleep in their torpid doze!

(from our Italian newspaper "il programma comunista", no.5/1971)

– According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure — political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas — also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.

Friedrich Engels to Joseph Bloch, Sept. 21th 1890

Residues and cankers of the so-called “national issues”

Amidst total chaos and a filthy brand of political opportunism that cannot even be compared to that of the past century when, brandished by socialdemocracy and Stalinism, the axes rained down on the heads and shoulders of proletarians, the so-called “national issue” is resuscitated today by little political bands and by authentic charlatans. And not only in the variegated world of the media and the web, but also in the real world of national “communist” branches in all countries: carefully dusted down Stalinists, neo-situationists, red-browns, Trotskyists, “communitarianists”, etc. who, in the attempt to distance the proletarian uprising, enter the petit-bourgeois political arena, just as the crisis of capitalism is entering a septic phase and what our class really needs is something completely different. And doesn’t tragedy take the form of farce in history’s successive version?

The pro-America court jesters, for example, (“sovereignists”, populists, liberals and protectionists) and the partisans of the “Russian salad bowl” (in Baltic and Caucasian areas, in the Donbass and the Crimea, etc.) serve as distractions to disorientate a proletariat that is still struggling to emerge from the ruins of tremendous historical defeats and bloody betrayals. As if the imperialist bourgeoisies were not enough to take to pieces and recompose the puzzles of the peoples: the so-called nations had to be churned up as well, the fake states, the pseudo-ethnic displacements, where, as a consequence of wars, whether direct or by proxy, the flows of raw materials, arms, drugs, monetary and fi-

nancial means intersect, along real highways for immense imperialist traffic.

And here we are once again, dealing with the residues and cankers of the so-called “national issues”, because the stages are growing vaster and vaster and the blood-streaked spotlights of the Mediterranean are lighting up again. So the question is: is the postulate of the self-determination of peoples still up-to-date in the present historical situation, in which, now that the phase of the bourgeois revolutions and the dual revolutions is over, there are the historical and social conditions for a “pure proletarian” revolution, not only in Europe but throughout the world? To us the answer is clear: NO. But we cannot stop here, at the monosyllable. Let us briefly look back at Lenin’s positions in 1914.

“First of all [...] it is necessary to make a distinct separation between two periods of capitalism, periods that are radically different from the point of view of the national movements. On the one hand there is the period of the collapse of feudalism and absolutism, the period in which the democratic bourgeois states are taking shape, and when the national movements become mass movements for the first time, dragging with them all the classes of the population into political life, in one way or another, through the press, participation in representative institutions, etc. etc. On the other hand the period of the fully formed capitalist States awaits us, a period in which the constitutional régime has long been consolidated, in which the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has developed

keenly, the period that might be defined the eve of capitalism’s collapse.

“Typical of the first period is the reawakening of national movements, which drag with them the peasants, too, - the most numerous social stratum and the one that is most difficult ‘to put in movement’ - in the struggle for political freedom in general and nationality rights in particular. Typical of the second period is the lack of mass bourgeois democratic movements: it is the period in which developed capitalism, bringing together and amalgamating nations already wholly drawn in by the circulation of goods, brings to the forefront the antagonism between internationalized capital and the international workers’ movement.

“Naturally, the two periods are not divided by a wall, but are connected by a number of rings in the transmission chain. Moreover, some countries stand out due to their swift national development, national composition, the way the population is located over the territory, etc. etc. A national Marxist programme for a given country cannot start to be elaborated without considering all these overall, historical factors and the actual political conditions.”

And he adds later on:

“In most western countries the issue has been settled for some time. It is therefore ridiculous to look for the solution to problems that are non-existent in western programmes.”¹

Thus far Lenin. With regard to the “national issue”, the question therefore clearly arises: should the programme of the world revolutionary party still include the question of



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[1] Lenin, “On the Right of Nations to Self-determination” (1914), in *Opere scelte* (Selected Works), Vol. II, p. 232, 235.

"the right of nations to self-determination" in pluri-national countries? Is it still possible to resume the tactics of "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat allied with the poor peasants" (the "dual" or "authentically popular" revolution)? What are the historical-concrete details, as Lenin might put it, that would oblige us to keep this slogan in our own programme? What historical-concrete details would oblige us, worldwide, to resume, *in an identical form*, the "Bakù Theses" necessary at the time of the Communist International in its 1920 Congress? The International of the initial congresses needed at the time to deal with the themes arising from the "national issue": the issue was then an open question in an immense part of the world and the "dual revolution" was still on the agenda. The age we are living in is, instead, one in which the national issue is *historically* no longer on the agenda. It is marked by a complex situation of historical paths but the direction of the momentum is already traced and the often contradictory events that may occur cannot change its course. It is not a question of the *economic independence* of nations, which is never possible in an age of imperialism, but the *formal independence* of nation States in the different areas of the world where the issue of the right to separation played a positive role when there were still pluri-national States. In its class war against capitalism, the international proletariat has always considered the claim to formal independence of a State of fundamental importance, *not, of course, to inflate it*, but as a precondition for overthrowing it, particularly in the presence of a "local" proletariat now roused by the forces of production.

Nonetheless, we cannot forget the importance that "non pure" contradictions still have in some areas of

the world and in the "advanced" West itself: i.e. contradictions not limited to those between industrial capital and salaried proletariat (marginal national movements, remnants of peasant movements). The question is: can these contradictions, secondary in the real dynamics of contemporary history, in the power relations between the main classes, facilitate the advance of the proletarian revolutionary movement? Might they have at least some potential, like the *epic of the coloured peoples* in the second post-war period? Faced with "pure dynamics", in which open conflict existed *only and exclusively between the two enemy classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie*, there would be no alternative other than to leave aside the secondary dynamics. And who could leave aside the mass of peasants in Africa and Asia (in China and India themselves), even though increasingly unable to generate "agrarian movements", and the ethnic-national conflicts that might well emerge under the pressure of inter-imperialist clashes? In addition, amongst the contradictions, how can the strength of the middle classes and working-class aristocracy of the imperialist age be ignored, capable as they are of forming a broad reactionary front precisely by exploiting ethnic, religious and national aspirations? And on some future day might not the powerful advance of the proletariat itself, during the course of a revolutionary civil war, have a gravitational effect, sufficient to move even the most backward in the opposite direction?

With the end of the old colonialism and the dawn of modern imperialism, all the great powers have made immense efforts to shake off the difficulties of managing occupied territories and forced annexations. They have transformed them into economic and political "agreements": in reality sordid

alliances and material and financial subjugation. As we know, the "right of peoples to self-determination" is flaunted on high in UN assemblies: "the equality of nations" is universally approved; the agreement to separate when this is in the interests of the bourgeoisie is a well-tryed process: the ideological heritage spread by the imperialist bourgeoisie is now dominant in world political and economic society. The latest events in the Balkans go to show that the pressure towards disaggregation in ex-Yugoslavia (its balkanization, as in the 1800s) was a product of German and U.S. power politics, of the ultra-developed West. It is the great powers that set alight the gunpowder of territorial divisions (Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Kosova, etc.), by calling them "nations". This does not mean that elsewhere the "right to separate" of minorities is not repressed by one bourgeoisie or the other, by the greater or lesser bourgeoisies (Northern Ireland, the Basque country, Chechenia, Kurdistan, Palestine, Tibet, to quote a few examples). And not only there. Missing from the list are small national groups, the remnants of old colonialisms, territorial entities entangled in the fabric of more than one nation, border areas where local wars are fuelled with no possibility of a real outcome. In central Africa there is a maze of peoples, States, groups etc.. But this does not stop the various fictitious, invented and re-mapped states from becoming imperialist battering rams, whose anti-proletarian violence is no slighter than those same super-power States. It is sufficient to take a look at the Middle East! Yet, amongst the national-communists there is always someone who holds sacred a "socialist fatherland" immersed in oil (Venezuela) or showered with sugar (Cuba).

"Residues": i.e. marginal si-



tuations, whose solution would have little or no effect on the overall dynamics of (worldwide, continental) class war. And despite this, can some downsizing of the slogan of the self-determination of peoples with respect to the terms it was proposed in the past, cause the "national issue" to disappear just because of this? No. There are those in the "left" who have confidence in a possible, pseudo-proletarian, "anti-imperialist" war of the future, in support of the "socialist fatherlands". The identity-stamp of the fatherland, it seems, is a comfort, supporting and baptizing both the right- and the left-wing petit-bourgeois, not forgetting the anarchists and followers of Proudhon (and, last but not least, the "patriots" and "strictly local partisans"). For communists any fatherland, real, fictitious, ethnic, including "neverland", in capitalist society is a mark branded in fire on the skin of the proletariat: the path of the proletarian revolution passes through the removal of the proletariat's brand mark as property of a nation, which is one and the same as capitalism, the company, the boss and the professional union man. The so-called "national issue" is a "problem" of the international class war: a problem to be solved and not brushed off. The reality of Capital will certainly be filled with contradictions but the task of the communist revolution is to abolish it dictatorially once and for all.

The proletariat should no longer burden itself with nationalist residues under the illusion that they might become a launch-pad for the socialist revolution (Northern-Irish, Basque, Catalan, Slav, Palestinian, Kurdish, Chechen, Ukraine, etc.). These are authentic cankers. The revolutionary proletariat fights on a 360° horizon and there are no "oppressed bourgeoisies from previous historical phases" to lay claim

to any "right to self-decision" or "separation" *to accelerate the course of the proletarian revolution*, because in terms of both quality and quantity the problem is now *out of time and out of place*. This does not prevent those petit-bourgeois initiatives from giving rise, perhaps, to timid and contingent struggles due to contradictions created locally, in the course of wartime occupations. *The causes are elsewhere*, however. Even the outbreak of the first world war did not have its origins in the Balkans, as, instead, was stated, with the whole parade of fictitious Balkan ethnic entities; and even less so was the second world war caused by the uncertain Italian, Polish, French Czech, Austrian borders, but instead by destructive forces that had been building up in the vaults of the imperialist powers.

The first driving force is to be found in the deadly struggle between capital and labour. To imagine the petit-bourgeoisie – "today" so-called oppressed – which Lenin wrote of, being able to become the trigger of proletarian revolutionary movement (the only thing that would interest us), is an illusion as ingenuous as it is dangerous: the ignition has become far too weak compared to the whole western European area up to 1871 and from 1905 onwards in eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. This phase is over now in all parts of the world. A revolutionary bourgeoisie fuelling an aggressive, revolutionary, democratic war of attack, like the one that existed under Bismarck before the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 does not and will no longer exist: the effort needed by Italy and Germany to become nations demonstrates the impossibility today, in the present context (economic, political and military) of supporting a new national epic and thus some possibility of the proletariat exploiting the political-social contradictions for transforming it into a

permanent revolution, as stated in the communists' 1848 programme. The impetus of the "coloured peoples", opposed by imperialist and colonial bourgeoisie forces, disguised as a "cold war" between imperial giants (who had agreed in Yalta on their areas of influence), was harshly repressed and put down due to the concern that other young bourgeoisies might occupy the stage of history to stake a claim to their share of the world's loot. The international proletariat can no longer burden itself with any national claims; in a pluri-national country it cannot support either, first and foremost, the oppressed nation (and its spokespeople, the bourgeoisie), the most interested party, or, obviously, the dominant nation, because in doing so it would preclude the defense of the conditions for the survival of its class brothers, the proletarians, supporting the privileges, racism and divisions created by the two "enemy" bourgeoisies. Instead, in the "oppressed nation" it finds the proletariat (and mass of those lacking any reserves) that will have to be uplifted to set up its own class dictatorship, together with the proletariat of the "dominant nation", with the slogan "Proletarians of the world, unite!" and the tactics of *revolutionary defeatism*, against both bourgeoisies. It also finds oppressed ethnic groups: residues on the margins of the economy, aspiring to federalism and local and cultural independence, which are the effects of historical or new imperialist subdivisions that nail them to an eternal past and future. It finds wartime occupations, as in Palestine, at the cost of the Palestinian and Arab-Israeli proletariat and the wretched refugees of the Nakba: occupations that do not prevent the Palestinian bourgeoisie, small or great, from carving out an economic space for itself with the support of the dominant Israeli bourgeoisie. It



finds snippets of the political map drawn up first by colonialism and then by imperialism over the whole of the Middle East, such as Kurdistan, chopped up into new and old divisions reflecting, in the same "oppressed nation", Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian and Turkish Kurds who share out, politically and economically, what remains of a territory that was supposed to constitute a "Kurdish nation", just as an "Arab nation" was to have been constituted by the entire territory reaching from Algeria to Turkey. And what has become of the Latin-American dream of a single nation reaching from Colombia to Chile? Oppressed and/or dominant, these populations are the result of subdivisions, or the sharing out of areas of influence not only of imperialism (in the first instance the USA), but of the native bourgeois-

sies: more carving up of territory that has already experienced the shift to a full-blown capitalist economy. On the same territory there lives a materially and spiritually oppressed proletariat that no longer awaits any national or ethnic liberation but *social liberation from class exploitation*: oppressed to such an extent that it can no longer even express from itself any awareness of its own simple interests for survival.

There remains our revolution, to be prepared, accompanied and brought to fulfillment: the prospect is not so distant, if even the Egyptian proletariat in the textile works and the countryside has made its voice heard... In the so-called "Arab springs", the proletariat attempted to shake off the exploitation imposed not only by an impe-

rialist bourgeoisie, but also by the national, industrial and agrarian bourgeoisies and their religious variants. Oppressed by war, forced emigration, prison camps, the hatred of the petit-bourgeoisie, the sub-proletariat and the religious powers, in material terms the proletariat is without a fatherland and without reserves, at the mercy of the counter-revolutionary tempests. Broadening its horizons, the proletariat in those areas is seeking its own class, "the brotherhood of the humiliated and the mistreated", whose bond constitutes the actual precondition for world revolution, both in ultra-developed economies and in those that have not yet crossed the threshold of survival.

January 2017



Class War

"Capitalism is war!" we have always stated, to the scandal of right-thinking people and fine souls. It is enough to look back over three centuries of history for confirmation. Yet we communists are not pacifists. We know quite well (and have always said so, what's more) that the wars at the beginning of the age of capitalism and for the affirmation of the new class, the bourgeoisie, were not only necessary but also progressive: they plucked humanity from the rule of the old feudal mode of production, which was by then superfluous and destructive, thus allowing it to take an enormous step forward in history. *Nonetheless they were wars*, with their dead, their destruction, their suffering: and those who celebrate the rule of capitalism in an abstract way as the "best of all possible worlds" must not forget this – *the bourgeoisie came into being and imposed its own mode of production amidst bloodshed and by means of weapons, spreading it throughout the world by means of weapons and bloodshed.*

But we communists also know that every mode of production has *its own history* – birth, maturity, death – and therefore, once the phase of war against the old mode of production is over, the next phase is that of the obstinate and savage clinging to power, a long agony to which all that can be done is put an end to it, violently and authoritatively. We have been in this phase for a hundred and fifty years, a phase in which the bourgeois mode of production is no longer more progressive than in the past but merely bloody and destructive: reaching a level of bloodiness and destruction unthinkable for previous modes of production (which were no joke, either!). In particular, the imperialist phase of capitalism that began at the end of the eighteen hundreds, its inevitable

evolution foreseen by Marx and Engels ever since the beginning (monopoly, state intervention, colonialism, the central role of financial capital in economic life, etc. etc.), has driven the bloody destructiveness of capitalism to monstrous extremes.

Just think of the 1900s: a whole century of wars and not only the two great imperialist bloodbaths of the First and Second World Wars. Both conflicts were preceded by a myriad of "minor" wars, more or less local ones or at least passed off as such (in fact, they were the screen for still hidden, inter-imperialist clashes, ready to explode): for example the fifteen years preceding 1914 and the fifteen preceding 1939. *And afterwards!* Since 1945, how many conflicts have massacred whole populations and devastated entire regions? How many deaths have there been on the battlefields or behind the lines, how many generations killed off? And in this start of a new millennium, in these sixteen years that have seen an exponential multiplication of hotbeds and explosions of conflict, the soaring figures for the arms industry and various other destructive inventions, the gigantic growth in the n-zero numbers of proletarians devastated by bombing, mass killings, lethal gas, white phosphorus, or even just famine and the desperate flight from war territories?

"Capitalism is war!" we have always stated. And there is an even more sinister and disturbing aspect in our affirmation, which corresponds to the situation in the 1900s: as we have recalled and demonstrated on more than one occasion, there are many technological innovations on which we congratulate ourselves today and which originate from the war effort, the preparation of one war or another and their spread on a planetary sca-

le... War is in the DNA of capitalism even when it is *apparently* at peace: and those who fail to realize this are just convenient idiots.

And then there is another war that has been going on ever since the dawn of the bourgeois mode of production. It is the *class war*, the ineradicable, more or less open, more or less latent conflict between capital and labour, the ruling class and the ruled class, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is a war that broke out almost immediately, in the factories, in the fields, in the cities, in the places of savage exploitation of men, women, children and old people, who took up the battle for survival and, in certain historical situations, for the affirmation of the new mode of production, classless and without exploitation: the Paris Commune of 1871, the October Revolution of 1917, the revolutionary attempt in China in 1927 – heroic attempts to open up a new chapter in the history of humanity, no matter if they were defeated in the field.

This *class war* continues today. It may seem that at the moment the bourgeoisie alone is fighting it, against the proletariat: with the deaths in factories, mines, building yards, the murder of proletarians in the picket lines at the hand of blacklegs, "the forces of law and order", legal and illegal gangs of repression, a true massacre of proletarians exhausted and worn down by work, by the frenzied pace, harmful substances, the cruel exploitation of migrants and clandestine workers and all the social effects these deaths, murders and this exploitation have on the entire population. Or with the tragedy of the present or future unemployment of whole generations without any prospects other than to beg the miserable charity of the State today, and tomorrow – when the moment comes – hurl



themselves one against the other on the battlefields of the next world war that is being prepared. *Today it is the bourgeoisie that is leading the class war.* And this is true, but *only partly*. Class antagonism, even when it appears to be slumbering or inexistent, is really *dramatically alive*: the very presence of the proletariat, the way its numbers are swelling infinitely as an effect of the economic crisis, the enormous mass of migrants crowding at the gates of the more capitalistically advanced countries, are in themselves the potential elements and factors of antagonism. From historical experience, the ruling class knows this very well and tries to face up to it in various ways, fuelling racism and wars

between the poor, introducing all possible repressive measures, equipping itself for a class war *that is ineradicable and lying in wait even when it does not appear to be*. The economic crisis itself, which the bourgeoisie is unable to solve and leave behind, is a factor that fuels antagonism, laying *the objective, material bases* for the class conflict. That's the way it is, oh fine souls: and if the proletariat does not seem to be aware of it today, it will be these same objective forces that drive it to the clash, the revolt, the rebellion, on pain of its own survival.

We communists, and with us the more combative proletarians, the militant avant-gardes, know that this is what we are obliged to go through.

We shall not allow, they will not allow, the bourgeoisie to lead this war for much longer. Power must therefore be seized from them by force, with violence (what ruling class has ever bent its head peacefully to its class enemy?) – *a force and a violence that will have to be organized and directed by the revolutionary party*. This is what we communists are working towards. To prevent the ruling class once again emerging victorious from the umpteenth worldwide bloodbath.

November-December 2016

Long Live the French Workers' Struggle!

The French workers are providing a magnificent example for the proletariat of all countries. For weeks now they have taken up the fight against the "jobs act" which facilitates lay-offs for economic reasons, allowing companies to fire workers when hit by a crisis (due to decreases in orders or sales, reorganization of the company or to safeguard competitiveness), introducing greater flexibility and conferring greater power on in-house or individual negotiation than it has at present, particularly with regard to management of working hours, with the relative impoverishment of national negotiations – all in a climate of general liberalization of the job market... Things that are all too familiar in Italy and elsewhere. Against trade union boycotting, which dilutes and breaks up the protest action, not hesitating (as is now common practice everywhere) to support harsh repression by the state, the French workers have come out on strike, have occupied and paralysed refineries, nuclear power stations, ports, roads, railway lines, brought Paris and other cities to a standstill with huge demonstrations and have clashed repeatedly with the "forces of law and order" which have been brought to the field in massive numbers. The action is still going on and it is difficult to foresee the developments and future outcomes. But even thus far, the French workers have confirmed by their actions that it is by fighting and not by means of union or political negotiations that living and working conditions are defended.

Long live the French workers' struggle! In the hope that their proud blaze of resistance may spread well beyond its national boundaries!

May 2016

The Enemy Is at Home. But "Our Home" Is the World

Europe and the world economic crisis, class autonomy and the essential need for a revolutionary party

The fact that Europe – this bourgeois and petit-bourgeois myth that has filled the post-war period – is fast falling to pieces is clear to everyone. Real or threatened centrifugal tendencies are growing in number; the *manu militari* breaks (Ukraine) remain open wounds; every other day war and the "overwhelming" role of Germany are on the agenda (as in the recent "declarations" of UK's Prime Minister Cameron and the ex-Lord Mayor of London, Boris Johnson); social disintegration with all its disastrous effects on the community and on the individual, which has started to affect large portions of the half-classes, too, is on the increase and with it chauvinist and populist rancours, violence and abuses; barriers are put up and borders re-established, the "Schengen" area is suspended for months; and the so-called "migrants' crisis" with its daily dramas and the constant, obscene buck-passing of responsibility, is used and exploited to widen gaps and aggravate opposing positions, accusations and blackmail...

This is not surprising. Since the end of the second, imperialist world bloodbath, we have spoken of Europe as a "jungle of nationalisms"¹, and as such incapable of assuming any unified and centralized order. Indeed, a common market and currency are not sufficient to hide the reality of a capitalism which, as it spreads across the whole of the globe (through that very "globalization" that is not recent history but

has been with it every since its beginnings), maintains a national basis and this, in times of crisis, makes its weight felt all-powerfully in the complex and merciless game being played in the *competition of all against all*.

Moreover, this situation is part and parcel of the more general crisis of the capitalist system and regards not only Europe, which is a pot of clay amongst pots of steel: China is experiencing an ongoing "slowdown", the term tactfully used by the international press to avoid referring to "recession"; India and Japan are doing no better; Africa is increasingly becoming the terrain for conquest and destruction by international capital; the Middle East is paying for its geo-political, strategic and economic position with its own blood; and what about those "beacons of XXI-century socialism", in the words of our many, home-grown idiots? In Brazil the usual, pitiful democratic waltz of scandals and mini-scandals is unable to hide the reality of a profound economic and social crisis, whilst in Venezuela plain *hunger* is on the increase, as staple goods continue to disappear one after the other...

However, in this disintegrating Europe that torments the nightmares of the bourgeoisie and the half-classes, the first, interesting symptoms of social fault lines are to be seen. In France action against the "Loi Travail" has been (and continues to be, as we write at the end of May 2016) ample and determined, with tough

and widespread demonstrations, accompanied (of course!) by the same old complaints about *casseurs*, about "recourse to violence", about the demonstrators' "non-democratic methods"... Other demonstrations (over the same issues: the attack on the working class, licence to licence, precariousness and flexibility, deteriorating living and working conditions) have taken place in Belgium and in particular in Brussels, despite the city being in the grip of military forces since the bloody attacks by so-called "Islamic terrorism". These are encouraging signs, which we communists observe and welcome enthusiastically, attempting, as far as we can, to be present at least as a factor that may clarify and provide orientation, though not yet organize or direct. In this regard, with reference to the struggles in these "National" sectors of the European (and hopefully tomorrow worldwide) proletariat, it is worth highlighting a dynamic process that reoccurs and should be kept carefully in mind. The media have given ample coverage to the so-called *Nuits Debout*, or "Standing Nights": i.e. the entry onto the field of a multiform, petit-bourgeois aggregate which, partly modelled on the American "Occupy" and partly on the Spanish "Indignados", has filled the night-time squares in many French cities with its usual, faint-hearted rituals. This evident reaction to the progressive crumbling of the half-classes comes parallel to the rise on the thermometer of the social si-



NOTES

[1] See also, amongst others, "Europa, giungla di nazionalismi", *il programma comunista*, n.2/1958; and "Il mito dell'Europa unita", *il programma comunista*, nn. 11, 12/1962.

tuation and tends to superimpose itself onto the reaction of the proletariat, swallowing it, blunting it and finally suffocating its edge and determination. These are the same dynamics, though on a far smaller scale (since the “welfare state” still acts as the prime buffer), that the Tunisian and Egyptian proletarian movements suffered from in past years, being rapidly swallowed up and distorted by the “Arab Springs”.

The class avant-gardes must take this trend into serious consideration, implicit as it is in the social dynamics developing in response to the profound crisis of the capitalist system: they must work to define *class autonomy* and defend it from the mortal embrace of the undifferentiated, popular and populist, democratic and pacifist and *substantially* anti-proletarian magma, typical of the moribund half-classes, opposing all this throu-

gh an increasingly necessary internationalist and class perspective: *the enemy is at home, but “our home” is the world!* This, and only this, is the sense of our internationalism!

Faced with the obscene ruthlessness of the “migrants’ crisis” and the inconceivable, daily suffering of enormous masses of uprooted, wounded, lost human beings and with the reappearance of scenes of brave fighting, yet still fragile in terms of organization and of limited range, comes a new and urgent need for *real international solidarity* with the struggles of any sector of a “national” proletariat that has at last taken the destiny of its own conditions into its own hands – not just the solidarity of words, the usual proclamations and declarations, but *of practice*, in the harsh but passionate and all-involving class battle: support in the form of strike action, fund collecting, picket lines, halts in

production, goods and transport, in the clear awareness that *the attack to one is an attack to us all*.

But to defend, spread and consolidate this class autonomy in a class and international perspective, what is increasingly needed is *the presence of the revolutionary party, an active and operational force founded on theory and practice, the essential factor for organization and direction*. It is impossible to work on this autonomy without making efforts to reach this objective methodically and constantly, with determination and patience. Whoever tries to avoid, delay or conceal the problem of reinforcing and establishing world roots for the revolutionary party takes up a position *on the other side of the barricades*.

June 2016

This historical truth is that in every profound revolution, the prolonged, stubborn and desperate resistance of the exploiter, who for a number of years retain important practical advantages over the exploited, is the rule. Never – except in the sentimental fantasies of the sentimental fool Kautsky – will the exploiters submit to the decision of the exploited majority without trying to make use of their advantages in a last desperate battle, or series of battles.

V. L. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918)

"TERRITORIAL ORGANISMS FOR THE PROLETARIAN STRUGGLE"

Foreword

We have insisted more than once that, if the evolution of trade unions in the modern, imperialist phase has transformed traditional union structure into an authentic organ for the economic and social control of the proletariat, this certainly does not mean that the need for economic defence has disappeared, or, indeed, the radical, potential antagonism of the proletariat towards capital. The advance of the economic crisis itself, the contradictions it opens up and the consequent social issues inevitably drive workers in all imperialist States onto this battleground and will oblige them to equip themselves once more with new stable defence structures, an authentic class organisation. And it will also be one of the battlegrounds for the clash between communists and the variegated front of the bourgeois reformist enemy (see: our publication *For the Uncompromising Defence of the Living and Working Conditions of Proletarians – Forms of organization and methods and objectives of struggles*). This, to put it very briefly, is the path that will involve the whole of our class once again taking up the battle on a purely trade-union and social basis: a path that not only is not linear, and never will be, but one which feeds, and will increasingly feed, on transitory organizational experiences – a little like an accumulation of potential energy before an explosion.

One of these organizational experiences (and this is confirmed by the history of the workers' movement) is the formation of "organisms" or "committees" of workers grouping outside the boundaries of the "company" or "factory" or – as in the case of elements from the highly fragmented area of civil servants –

"category", which also attempt to bring together those proletarians who experience isolation in microscopic companies or find themselves isolated under the "VAT régime". They are important experiences, which often point the way to possible reorganization: but they are not (and cannot be) the embryo of a class trade union. They often stand alongside other experiences of struggle, important but differently organized, which for us communists are also of a transitory nature.

What is important for us is that these organisms should be *open to all workers*, even to those who are subject to and the expression of positions belonging to the variegated world of maximalist reformism. Nonetheless, in order to avoid them turning into barren and useless centres for debate amongst militants, or for groups of well-meaning activists serving the most diverse of causes, it is the duty of us communists to establish contents and precise limits for encouraging the vitality, the duration and the pursuit of objectives leading to a split with the betrayal and inertia of all national union corporations, both large and small.

It is therefore a question of setting out the *guidelines* according to which the fighting spirit of these organisms can be directed, and establishing the objectives for organizing spontaneous rebellion and rejecting the "corrupt practices of the trade unions".

The terrain on which these organisms battle is that of the defence of our class's immediate interests: salary, health and, in general, living and working conditions, starting from the specific situation in companies but capable of being generalized and referring to all salaried workers.

We must be aware that in the present context of current laws and balances of power, these organisms would hardly be able to negotiate contracts and have the authority to "close a labour dispute". Yet for this very reason they can organize the *fighting spirit* representing the interests of all workers, *beyond the limits of the negotiations themselves*: to promote and organize the struggle (and defend it), to coordinate and sustain it by raising resistance funds, always identifying a nucleus of reliable and militant workers to control the professional union leaders, sticking close to them throughout the whole dispute.

There is obviously going to be a clash with institutional trade unionism and its representatives and this is why a clear distinction must always be made between the "territorial organisms of proletarian struggle", the genesis of which we encourage, and the RSU ("Unified Union Representation") and company trade union sections: this means that, whilst, for practical purposes, trade union cards amongst the workers belonging to the "organism" can be tolerated, it will necessarily have to encourage and practice class-based unionism in every possible way.

In what follows we shall see the points around which these experiences of proletarian struggle must be organized.

Four areas of action

In the present historical situation, the result of a profound transformation in the mechanisms of proletarian defence in the age of imperialism, the organization of workers expresses itself in two ways: in trade union structures that are fully integrated into State politi-



cal and economic apparatus ("nationalized" so to speak, though formally "free"), animated by a workers' aristocracy that is still widespread over the whole territory, definitively and rigidly positioned on the enemy front, and in a collection of minute union structures.

Before sketching out an organizational draft, let us define the areas in which the more general aspect of the struggles for economic defence converge, the battle inside the big corporations, as in the smaller ones, and finally, the context in which, within them, class-oriented and revolutionary political forces must operate.

The area of economic battle is where immediate class interests are defended, with the objective of safeguarding salary and health (working hours, pace of work, overtime, productivity, intensity) and in general *the living and working conditions of all proletarians*. Since it does not act in the context of a contractual relationship, as happens with a trade union (though not because of an ideological refusal), the *militant territorial organism* gives practical expression to all class needs and interests in all areas of work, using any means of struggle in relation to the given balances of power and events that capitalism encounters. To do this, the state of organization and activity is that of "near-legality": it thus promotes and supports activities of defence, coordination and struggle (delegating to the more combative proletarians and the resistance funds).

The area of *institutional trade unionism* is excluded from this territorial organism for proletarian struggle, since for a long time now it has become impossible to acquire any space for battle or positions that make for class activity within the

present trade unions: the current situation would mean being hounded out and reported to the authorities, unless an external balance of power were created that was strong enough to counter this. The agenda must therefore include the work of *reporting betrayal and open blacklegging, coercion and pacification agreements, fake strikes, cross-class objectives and regulation of strike action*, continuously re-introduced in the macabre mantra of the institutional trade unions. In particular, what should be stressed is a condemnation of the "trade union 'delega' system", by means of which our class is delivered into the hands of the bourgeoisie ("delega" or "proxy" is the mechanism whereby legally recognized union organizations, in agreement with the State and the bosses, automatically deduct their union fees from workers' pay cheques). Instead of the present institutionalized organization, an independent and class-based form of trade unionism should be promoted.

The area of union "grassroots committees" can be used in such a way, and to an extent, where they anticipate the work of class unionism amongst the workers. Considering that in most cases these "committees" differ very little from the institutional trade unions, apart from the fact that they are far smaller and pulverized into individual sectors and categories, their work must be criticized when it proves to be supporting the big corporations. Interests that often escape the big corporations converge in them and thus the level of corporative conservation (the niche that has come into being to protect specific interests) is highly resistant, whilst being accompanied by a certain conflictual vitality. These "committees" must be encouraged to leave the area of individual, professional categories and forge wider

relations with other, identical associations, with the objective of creating a *unified, cross-category union* at the very least.

The more general *political area* has the task of fuelling the proletarian's battle of defence with methods and content, objectives and organizational capacity. Always lurking in these "committees" is an economistic trend that is often accompanied by a "politicalist" one (the fanciful ambition to transform them into "cells" of future political parties or a "workers' parliament"). What must be cultivated, then, is *the memory and experience of the international proletarian battles*, as a training ground for overcoming the present capitalist mode of production.

Possible organizational draft

- A militant territorial organism for the defence of the living and working conditions of the proletariat must be open to all workers but closed to the interests of the bourgeoisie and thus also to the agents of institutional union corporations.

- It must be a place for exchanging views on decisions for all workers (employed in any sector but also unemployed, pensioners, the widest varieties of the precariously employed and, in any case, of any gender, age, background etc.) who, by means of their active participation, found a single possible and necessary proletarian unit, the sort that starts out by identifying the basic interests of our class.

- It must be an instrument which, by organizing the forces emerging from the workplaces (and transferring them outside the prison of the workplace), tends to overcome the strictures of trade interests, with the help of the force expressed by all other workers.

- It must be a means of agitation, i.e. an active tool of support and a link between the various struggles that open up over the territory, particularly when the quality of them expresses a tendency to go beyond the compatibility imposed and expressed by the institutional trade union apparatus.

- It must act as an expression and reinforcement of the practice of workers' struggles and thus put forward and bring into use all those methods which, whilst distorted and monopolized by institutional organizations, are an expression of their strength, so that they once again become authentic class guidelines for intervention.

- It must give proof of functional

organization, with a structure that tends to guarantee stability and continuity.

- The decision-making mechanism cannot be that of some abstract proletarian democracy or, worse still, that of an equally idealistic, unanimous decision-taking by an assembly but must be an expression of the operational quality of a militant majority.

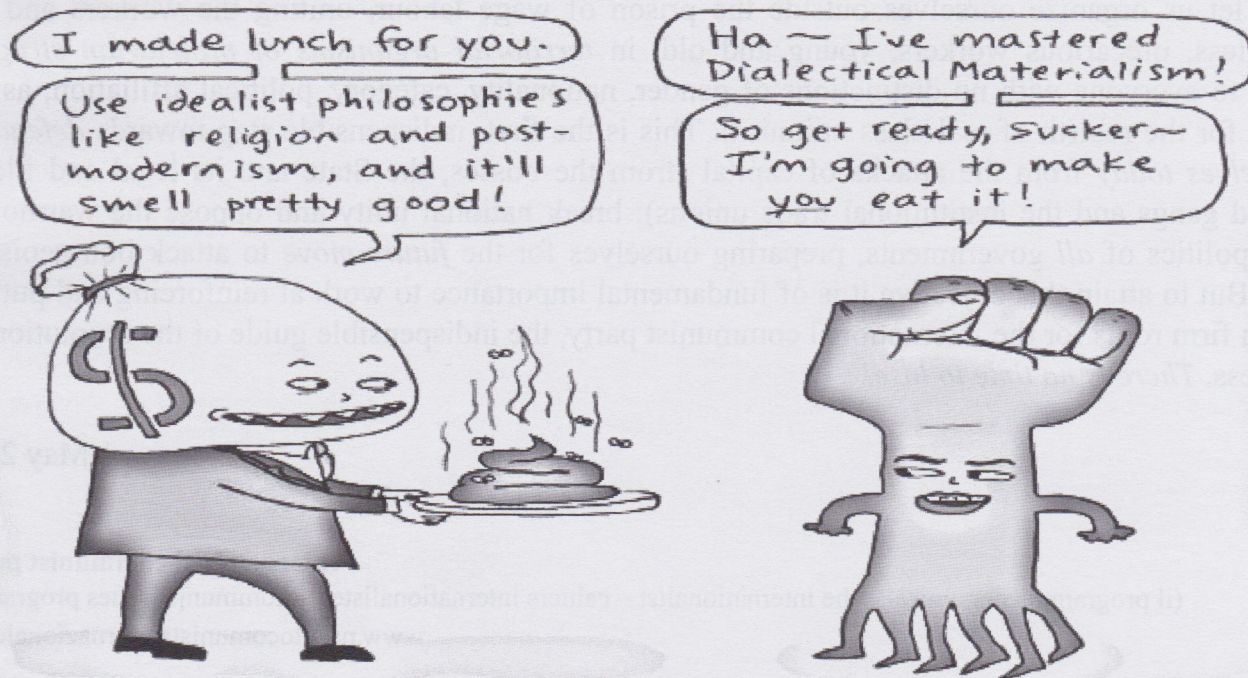
- An organism like this cannot shut itself away from the experiences of social struggle that spring up over the territory, struggles that other sectors of the population also take part in (housing, services, environment etc.) but must firmly and unyieldingly introduce into them not only the point of view but also, and

above all, the interests of the proletariat.

- Precisely because it is not of a political, but of an economic and social nature, an organism like this is not closed to an exchange between the different political positions of the workers who animate it: indeed, it encourages them to mature towards revolutionary, internationalist and radically anti-capitalist positions; but it refuses to become the terrain for a "debate between political groups", which is a terrain that is by its very nature barren and harmful.

March 2016

THEORY MATTERS.



Against all imperialist wars

There's no need for a lot of words: only the pathetically deluded can fail to see that deep within the capitalist economy, which has been in a critical state for decades now with all its ups and downs, a new, generalized conflict is being prepared, even more devastating than the two past world wars and the infinite "minor wars" that have preceded and followed them.

The conflict is not the will of Donald Trump or Kim Jong-un (or other future puppets), even if they're growling and flexing their muscles at the moment. Imperialist wars are not the result of the "will for power" or "homicidal folly" of one "dictator" or the other (or – worse still – of one "people" or another). They are the product of capital's own dynamics, *obliged as it is* to resort to them in the attempt to get the jammed mechanism of accumulation moving again, by destroying what has been produced in excess (work-force included).

In the age of imperialism, there are no "aggressor countries" and "attacked countries", "rogue States" and "friendly States": it is the various national bourgeoisies that attack one another, continuing in this way – with increasingly cruel and extreme means – the "peaceful" competition (viz: wars of commerce!) on which the capitalist mode of production is founded. Precisely: the two world wars and the dozens and dozens of "minor" conflicts should have taught this! *Faced with the next conflict being prepared, not a single proletarian, man or woman, at the service of the ruling class's interests, their States or their armies!*

The "fatherlands", the "nations", the "religions" – let us leave them to the bourgeoisie (and their faithful, petit-bourgeois henchmen), who use them to dispatch the proletariat to be massacred in their name on the battlefronts. We have no "fatherlands" or "nations" to defend or "religions" to spread: our war can only be *a class war*, of proletarians against bourgeoisie, to finally win power and bring into being a classless society, where no-one is exploited and there are no exploiters.

So let us organize ourselves outside the prison of wage labour, uniting the workers and the workless, precarious workers, young and old, in *territorial organisms of proletarian struggle*, open to everyone with no distinctions of gender, nationality, category, political affiliation, as the basis for the rebirth of real class unionism. This is the first, indispensable step towards *defending ourselves today* from the attacks of capital (from the bosses, the State and its legal and illegal armed gangs and the institutional trade unions): break national unity and oppose the warmongering politics of *all* governments, preparing ourselves for the *future move* to attack bourgeois power. But to attain this objective it is of fundamental importance to work at reinforcing and putting down firm roots for the international communist party, the indispensable guide of the revolutionary process. *There is no time to lose!*

1 May 2017

International communist party

(il programma comunista – the internationalist – cahiers internationalistes – kommunistisches programm)

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Why we are not "bordigists"

"I am not a Marxist!" - Karl Marx

As materialists, we know that language is a super-structure, standing in a dialectic relationship to the mode of production that determines and expresses it. We also know that, in a class-based society, the dominant ideology is the ideology of the ruling class and language is immersed in it, giving voice to its basic characteristics, divisions and balances of power, and thus contributing in its turn to influencing society as a whole. In our present times (with a capitalism that has reached its supreme, imperialist phase), individualism, which has always been an aspect of bourgeois ideology directly linked to the mode of production and consumption, increasingly pervades language and through it the whole universe of social relations.

And so we use the term "Marxist" regularly, whilst knowing that it is really an improper use (as Marx's famous declaration, quoted above, firmly states) and that the term "dialectic materialism" or "communism" would be better. So much for that: usage, conventions and practicality have the upper hand and there is nothing wrong with this, on condition that... *On condition* that the sense of the exclamation is well understood: as it lies entirely in the *refusal* (by Marx and all consistent communists) to consider the great work done by him (and by Engels and many other, more or less anonymous militants who, then and later, worked for the communist revolution) as the fruit of genial thought by an individual mind, as an "interpretation of the world" by the umpteenth philosopher. "Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change it*" (XI Thesis on Feuerbach) is not just a slogan: it

means that with materialist science's appearance on the scene of history we are no longer witnessing "philosophical systems" which may quite rightly assume the name of one thinker or founder of a school of thought or another (Platonism, Aristotelism, Tomism, Kantism, Hegelism, etc.), just because they are "personal interpretations of the world"; we are actually witnessing a *science*, discovered and elaborated thanks to a combination of far broader and more complex historical and social factors than just the single noddle (doubtless of impressive proportions) of the person who materially takes it up, unravels it, explains it and publishes it.

We are not denying the exceptional contribution made at specific moments in history by individuals: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Bordiga... However, we refuse to characterize this contribution as a personal one, almost as if materialism were a construction made of Lego to which everyone can add his or her own "original" piece. This is why we refuse the expression "Marxism-Leninism" (precisely because of its awful revisionist implications): Lenin himself might well have exclaimed like Marx, "I am not a Marxist-Leninist!", because the expression reeks of bourgeois individualism, trampling underfoot the very heart of the materialist concept of history, overturning and misrecognizing the function of personality in history, attributing to individual *x* the role of elaborator of concepts that "integrate" what was "conceived" originally by individual *y* – precisely, more pieces of Lego for a construction in progress, to which individuals can make their own, eclectic contribution. It is no coincidence that "Marxism-Leninism" (not to speak of "Marxism-Lenini-

sm-Maotsetungthought") would become a political-linguistic expression of the advancing and subsequently victorious counter-revolution, a phenomenon *materialistically* rooted in the history of the class war and not the fruit of individual actions: that counter-revolution that would overthrow the international communist movement from the mid-Nineteen-Twenties onwards and which, precisely because of the linguistic conditioning mentioned above, we are obliged to call "Stalinism" for the sake of brevity and in the absence of any other, brief definition (to define it, our comrades in the 'Thirties and 'Forties used the expression "Centrism"; but today that would be incomprehensible).

Even more so do we refuse the label "Bordigists", for a series of valid reasons. Far from failing to acknowledge the enormous contribution made by Amadeo Bordiga *for his whole life*, we know (and confirm this against all his bourgeois "biographers") that this was *Party work* and not the individual mental product of an "isolated thinker": it was the transmission, founded on a rock-solid theoretical basis, of a whole body of historical experience, from *militant to militant* – and by a militant who had always declared the *impersonal nature of the doctrine and practice*, obeying it even when flattery might have led him in a different direction – an anonymous militant, who had been trained in an *impersonal* doctrine, for a cause that reaches far further than individuals and generations. Bordiga and the collective work for the revolutionary Party are inseparable. Moreover, the huge job of theoretical restoration was made possible not only thanks to its being the expression of collective work by the Party, which,

if we want to take this viewpoint, saw Bordiga as its spearhead, but also thanks to the political and organizational continuity achieved by comrades who, during the '30s, were active abroad, as well as clandestine in Italy - which, over the next few decades, ensured the combination of forces (not all theoretically homogeneous) from which our Party emerged, by selection, in 1952. Thus, once again, a collective, anonymous, impersonal experience: that of shared work by militants united for a historical objective, oriented towards the rebirth of the revolutionary Party.

But this is not all. We are not "Bordigists" because Bordiga's work (of restoring and re-proposing "Marxist" theory in its entirety, after the monstrous devastations suffered in the counter-revolution, and of working for the reaffirmation of the revolutionary Party) can in no sense be considered an extra, a "new contribution", a "new interpretation", a "special variety" of Marxism (or, as the well-paid intellectuals addicted to their own egos say, of "Marxisms": precise-

ly!). Bordiga was a most efficient tool, "...the splendid 'machine'," we wrote in our press in the article commemorating him at the time of his death in 1970, "through which ran [...] the current of Marxism's high potential." And we continued, "...and we say 'Marxism' as we, of the Left, have always understood it, not as an abstract theory to whose budding gems we bow down in a pretence of daily veneration, but as a sharp and shining weapon, whose grip, or aim, we must never let go of - a weapon that must be saved, so that it is not lost in a whirlpool of defeat, by sacrificing everything, first and foremost the ignoble *self*, just as, in order to use it when the battle is raging, weakness, misery, vanity, stupid pride, the mean little 'accounts book' of the individual must be destroyed, to save its healthy or even precious potential in the interests of the 'class-Party'." ("On the death of Amadeo Bordiga. An exemplary militancy at the service of the revolution", *Il programma comunista*, no. 14/1970).

Bordiga did not add or modify a single comma in the body of doctrine that emerged in the mid-1800s

when conditions were mature for it because the bourgeois mode of production had given and said of itself all it had to, experimentally verified (*both theoretically and in practice*) in the following one and a half centuries through a few, shining victories and many bloody defeats: in the very midst of the counter-revolution he managed to remain in place and gather around himself new generations of militants - the *Party*.

And so we leave to others the petty idolatry of the "individual" and pay no attention to the pretentious irony (or at times the arrogant ignorance, the vindictive contempt, the disgusting slander) towards "Amadeo Bordiga" and the "Bordigists". Aware of belonging to a generation of militants that has faced and will continue to face different problems and duties, we pursue the same work in different conditions: amidst errors, inadequacy and uncertainty, but always anonymously, impersonally and collectively. *Communist militants* - that is all.

December 2013

Do you want to know more about Stalinism in Italy and Antonio Gramsci's counter-revolutionary role? Read our articles "The Laboratory of Counter Revolution" and "Gramsci, or the Poverty of Philosophy", in nn.10/2001 and 11/2002 of our review Internationalist Papers.

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You can also read them in our website: www.internationalcommunistparty.org.

7. Although small in number and having but few bounds with the proletarian masses, in fact jealously attached to its theoretical tasks, which are of prime importance, the Party, because of this true appreciation of its revolutionary duties in the present period, refuses to become a circle of thinkers or of those searching for new truths, of "renovators" considering as insufficient the past truth, and absolutely refuses to be considered as such. No movement can triumph in the historical reality without theoretical continuity, which is the condensation of the experience of past struggles. Consequently, the Party denies anyone claiming to be Marxist the liberty to elaborate (or better to lucubrate) new schemes or explanations of the contemporary social world. No member of the Party, be he the most highly formed intellectually, has the liberty individually to make analyses, critics or perspectives: the Party defends the integrity of a theory which is not the product of a blind faith but the very science of the proletariat, edified with secular materials, not by thinkers but by history itself reflected in the historical conscience of the revolutionary class and crystallised in the revolutionary party: facts have but confirmed the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism.

13. The cult of the individual is a very dangerous aspect of opportunism; it is natural that leaders who have grown old, may go over to the enemy and become conformists, and there have been but few exceptions to the rule. Experience has shown that revolutionary generations succeed each other rapidly. That is why the Party accords maximum attention to the young people and makes the greatest possible effort to recruit young militants and to prepare them for political activity, without any personal ambition or personality cult. In the present historical moment, deeply counter-revolutionary, the forming of young leaders capable of upholding the continuity and revolutionary tradition over a long period is necessary. Without the help of a new revolutionary generation the starting up of the movement is impossible.

"Fundamental Theses of the Party" (1951)

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